ANDY ROBERTSON ○ PRE-SEASON TOUR ○ CURTIS JONES ○ LIVERPOOL FC WOMEN ○ RHIAN BREWSTER

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LFC Mag Sep 18 £4.50

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Official Liverpool FC Monthly Magazine

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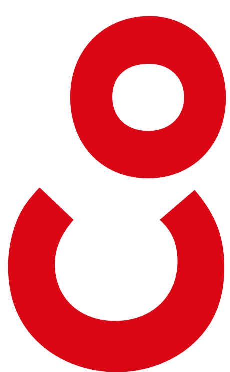
KOP STARS

Meet the new Fab Four!

NEW-LOOK MAG FOR 2018/19!


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LFC



SALAH'S BACK IN THE GROOVE

Mo Salah takes the attack to the Manchester United defence during the Reds' 4-1 victory in the International Champions Cup fixture in Michigan. A couple of days earlier, the Egyptian King had only been on the pitch a matter of seconds when he marked his first appearance of pre-season with a goal against the other Manchester team as Liverpool defeated City 2-1 in New York. "I feel good and my shoulder is much better," he said. "I am happy about what I am doing, so I just keep doing the same."

WELCOME TO THE HOUSE OF FUN

A crowd of 101,254 witnessed Liverpool's International Champions Cup meeting with Manchester United at the 'Big House' in Michigan. The Reds ran out comfortable 4-1 winners against Jose Mourinho's side thanks to penalties from Sadio Mane and Sheyi Ojo, a goal from Daniel Sturridge and a spectacular overhead-kick from Xherdan Shaqiri on his first outing for the club. "The atmosphere was outstanding," manager Jürgen Klopp said. "It's a wonderful area. Detroit is improving again and the future is bright."




M.SALAH



A NEW ERA FOR LFC WOMEN

With a re-brand of the Women's Super League, Liverpool FC have taken the opportunity to launch Liverpool FC Women, previously known as Liverpool Ladies FC. Manager Neil Redfearn says: "We are entering a new era for women's football and this is an ideal time to ensure we are set up for future success. The re-naming fits perfectly with the overall move towards a more modern and inclusive game."


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FAB v BVB

Looking fab in our new deep violet away strip, Fabinho evades a challenge during a pre-season clash with Borussia Dortmund in Charlotte's Bank of Ameircia Stadium, home of the NFL's Carolina Panthers

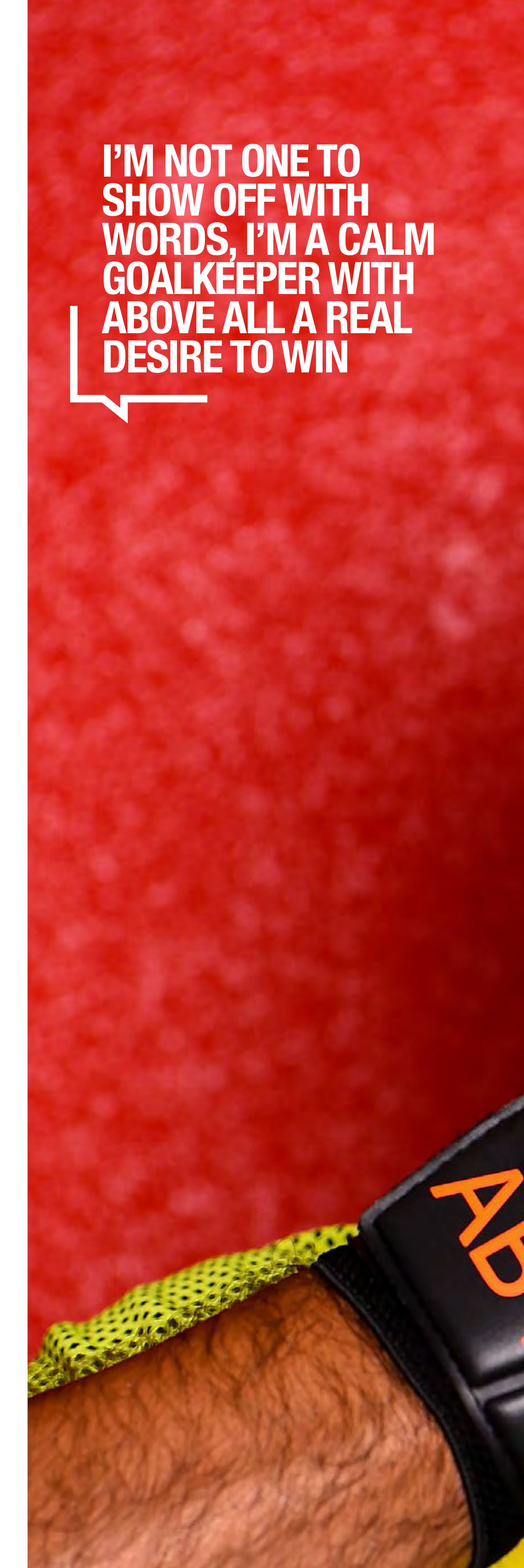

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ALLEZ ALLEZ ALISSON



Remember how good he was for Roma last season, despite the result? Here's what he remembers and why's he's thrilled to be back at Anfield

Words: Chris McLoughlin



I'M NOT ONE TO SHOW OFF WITH WORDS, I'M A CALM GOALKEEPER WITH ABOVE ALL A REAL DESIRE TO WIN

During a distinguished career that lasted for over 20 years and saw him win a number of honours including the World Cup with Brazil in 2002, Dida established himself as one of the best goalkeepers of his generation.

He even saved a penalty from Xabi Alonso while playing for AC Milan in the 2005 Champions League final against Liverpool in Istanbul...but couldn't do anything about the rebound! Or the spot-kicks from Didi Hamann, Djibril Cisse and Vladimir Smicer in the penalty shoot-out that followed, although he did deny John Arne Riise.

The Brazilian legend did claim a winners' medal two years later in Athens when *I Rossoneri* got their revenge on the Reds, and eleven years on he'll be keeping a very close eye on Liverpool thanks to his friendship with Alisson Becker, even if it was our new goalkeeper who effectively ended Dida's glittering career!

Alisson was born in October 1992 in the city of Novo Hamburgo (New Hamburg) near Porto Alegre in southern Brazil. He joined local club Internacional's academy in 2003 aged eleven. He progressed through the ranks and made his senior debut a decade later in February 2013 but found himself playing understudy to Muriel Becker, his big brother.

Meanwhile on Boxing Day 2013, at the age of 40, Dida signed for Internacional. From February 2014, after recovering from injury, he became the club's number one keeper until a poor performance and a late red card in a 5-0 defeat to Chapecoense in October of that year.

Alisson, who'd turned 22 a week earlier, was given his opportunity instead of Muriel while Dida was suspended and took it with both gloves. He did so well that it was six months before Dida started another game – the last one of his career – and by then the pair had struck up a friendship. They spent two years together at Internacional and Dida, who is now 44, rates the new Liverpool keeper highly.

"Alisson is a great goalkeeper and he is very strong," he told





Omnisport. "He improved so much lately. He is confident and brave. I hope he can perform at his best because he is a great friend of mine. I lived with him for two years at Internacional in Porto Alegre. I back him a lot."

Internacional won four consecutive Campeonato Gaucho Serie A titles while Alisson was there between 2013 and 2016 with his increasingly impressive displays earning him a full international debut for Brazil against Venezuela in October 2015 and a move to AS Roma the following July.

As incredible as it seems now, he didn't make a single Serie A appearance for Roma in 2016/17, spending the season on the bench as second choice to ex-Arsenal keeper Wojciech Szczsney, although he was selected for a Champions League qualifier, ten Europa League games and four Coppa Italia matches.

At the start of 2017/18, however, with Szczsney having left for Juventus and coach Luciano Spalletti replaced by Eusebio Di Francesco, the Brazilian was installed as Roma's number one. It changed the direction of his career.

"If I hadn't had the guarantee of playing, I would have asked to leave Roma," he admitted last September. "This is the most important year of my career. I didn't want to leave but I would have had to think of myself and my targets. Now I know that everything depends on me and my performances. Nobody in Brazil, in a World Cup year, has a guaranteed place."

Alisson excelled last season. He nailed down his position as Brazil's number one – starting all five of their World Cup games ahead of Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson – with a string of fine

I HOPE TO CONTRIBUTE SOMETHING TO THIS TEAM: I'M GOING TO DEDICATE MYSELF DAY TO DAY AND I'LL GIVE EVERYTHING TO HELP LIVERPOOL GROW





displays as Roma finished third in Serie A and of course reached the semi-finals of the Champions League. But Reds fans obviously have fonder memories of that last-four tie than he does!

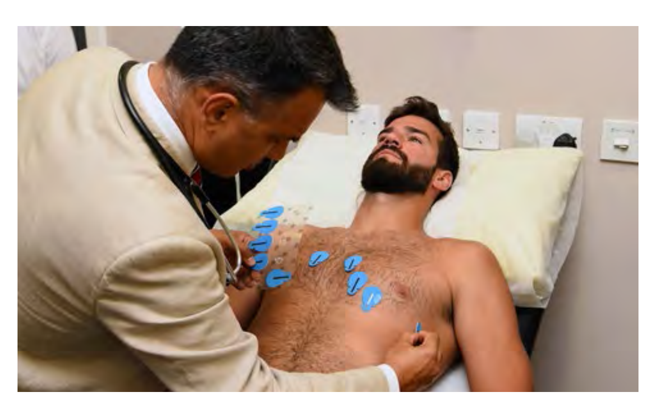
"I think it was one of the tensest games of my career and one of the most exciting," he told LFCTV when asked about the pulsating first leg. "I think the Anfield factor contributed a lot to that.

"Putting the result aside, which was an unfortunate moment in my career, it was an amazing game. I remember for 35 minutes we went toe-to-toe, it was a balanced game, but from the moment the fans started believing in the team it brought an energy into the stadium and the players grew. It was the moment they started growing into the game.

"Salah scored the first goal, sending the stadium into delirium – it was incredible. Players hope for that type of support from the fans. For me, that's great for this coming season. Hopefully I can benefit from it and my performances will become even better on the pitch."

Jürgen Klopp's side netted seven goals past the 26-year-old over the two legs to secure a trip to Kiev to face Real Madrid in the final, but what shouldn't be overlooked is that Alisson also made nine saves during those two games, preventing the Reds from being even more rampant.

Indeed the second-leg goals from Sadio Mane and Gini Wijnaldum were the only two he conceded in Champions League games played at the Stadio Olimpico all season, having kept clean-sheets against Atletico Madrid, Chelsea, Qarabag, Shakhtar Donetsk and Barcelona.







Far left: in the Brazil team that played England at Wembley last year; and, this page, his first day with LFC





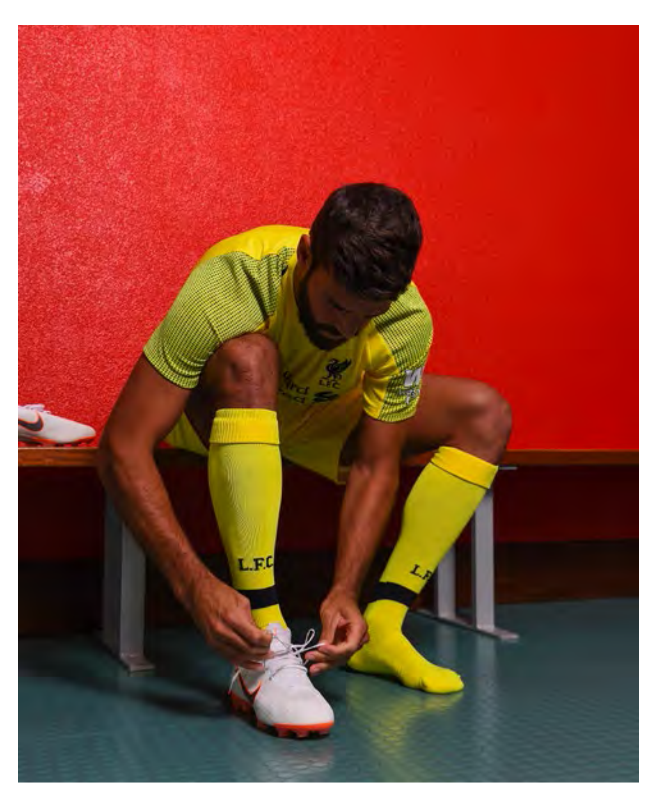


The new man dons his gloves for a first interview with LFCTV and a photoshoot at Melwood

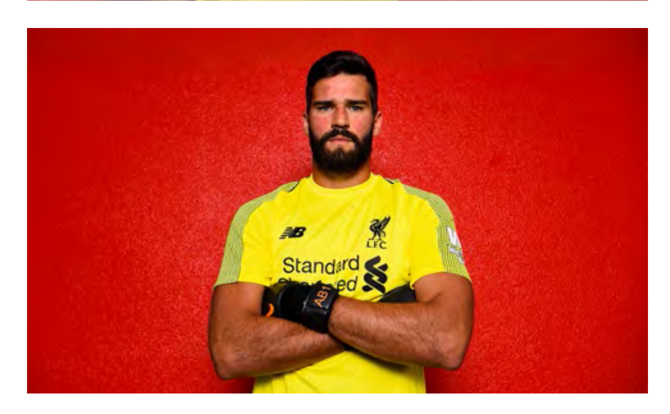












He also kept 17 clean-sheets in 37 Serie A appearances and made one assist, for a Stephan El Shaarawy goal in a 1-1 draw away to Inter Milan, with his performances accelerating his reputation.

He now finds himself at Liverpool after the Reds agreed to pay Roma a world-record fee for a goalkeeper to secure his signature, and he is determined to prove he's worth every penny.

"I like to show my ability on the field. I'm not one to show off with words. I'm a calm goalkeeper and above all I've got a real desire to win.

"When I get on the pitch I give everything for the team, everything for the shirt. Fans and players can expect a lot of dedication from me on the pitch and in day-to-day training. I look to work on all aspects of my game, always aiming for perfection and looking to improve every day.

"I'm quick to come off my line. I'm an agile keeper, despite being tall. I've got very good agility and strength in my legs. With the ball at my feet I like to get involved in the play. I think my style of play will fit in very well with Klopp's style."



Six-feet four-inches tall Allison, who's married to Natalia (a doctor) and has a young daughter, is a commanding presence. But before agreeing to the move he sounded out his Brazilian international team-mate Roberto Firmino to give him the Liverpool lowdown.

"I had spoken to him before things really started to happen. When the negotiations became official I spoke to him and I only heard good things about the club and the city. He is a player who feels really at home here. He is loved by the fans and really popular with his team-mates. He is a great person and only had positive things to say. He said if I were to come here, I'd be really happy as well.

"Putting our friendship to one side and the time we spent together with the national team, I'm really happy to be at the same club as him and have the same daily routine as him. Hopefully we can develop a great deal together."

Alisson knows he will have to adapt to the physicality of English football – "the difference in the Premier League is that it's very competitive physically so I'll try to improve in that aspect as well and adapt as soon as possible to the style of play" – but believes he will also grow as a Liverpool player, and that can help the Reds flourish.

"I'm coming from a club where I was very happy and I'm sure I'll be very happy here. I'll give my all to give something back to the fans and join this team because it's a developing group achieving great things. They got to the Champions League final and that's something that motivates me: to be part of a group that competes at a high level.

"I believe this is going to add a great deal to my career in terms of professional growth, so I can add something to the team for the team to grow even further because it's a massive club.

"I'm the type of guy that always wants to succeed in life. I came from nothing and I've arrived at this moment in my career. Thank God, together with my family and the people who work with me.

"Rest assured I'll give everything on the pitch. I hope my style can contribute to the team and I'm going to dedicate myself day to day, respecting everyone.

"I'll give everything to help Liverpool grow."


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HERE WE MO AGAIN
Wearing LFC's new red jersey in New Jersey, Mo Salah's first post-World Cup pre-season run-out came in a 2-1 win against Manchester City. And he scored. Obviously. It's what the FIFA Ballon d'Or nominee does best


L.F.C.
Standard

Shaqiri's GREATEST HITS

Here's what we can expect: magical moments for club and country from our exciting new signing

Words: Chris McLoughlin

The hits don't lie. Whenever, wherever Xherdan Shaqiri is on a football pitch he will try everything to score and when he lets fly with that sweet left foot of his, the outcome is almost inevitable.

Stoke City fans experienced deja vu when Shaqiri struck three stunning left-footed efforts in two games against Hull City, while he did it again for Switzerland in World Cup 2014 and Euro 2016 with two of the most memorable strikes of both tournaments. No wonder Kopites are delighted he's now a Red.

The 26-year-old winger is renowned for the power and pace of his long-range shooting and in 2016 spoke about why he is able to generate such power when he shoots.

"I have really massive calves," he told *Soccer AM*. "They are just like everyone else's, just a little bigger! Maybe it is more dangerous for me to get an injury because I have really massive muscles, but also for the power it really helps a lot for me. I think you see that on the pitch."

Shaqiri has already added to his spectacular goals collection with a stunning bicycle-kick in the 4-1 pre-season victory against Manchester United in Michigan so to whet the appetite even more we've taken a look back at his six greatest club-and-country hits from his time with the Potters and for Switzerland at international level.

Altogether now: Shaqiri, Shaqiri!

BOY WONDER







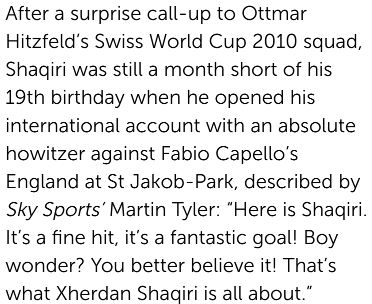












Switzerland 1 England 3
Euro 2012 qualifier
7 September 2010

After a surprise call-up to Ottmar Hitzfeld's Swiss World Cup 2010 squad, Shaqiri was still a month short of his 19th birthday when he opened his international account with an absolute howitzer against Fabio Capello's England at St Jakob-Park, described by *Sky Sports'* Martin Tyler: "Here is Shaqiri. It's a fine hit, it's a fantastic goal! Boy wonder? You better believe it! That's what Xherdan Shaqiri is all about."

The FC Basel winger had cut in from the right onto his left foot and with Ashley Cole only making a half-hearted attempt to get a block in, he dummied his past him before rifling in a 25-yarder that swerved and dipped past a shocked Joe Hart. It was the first of his 21 goals for Switzerland...so far!

HAT-TRICK HERO











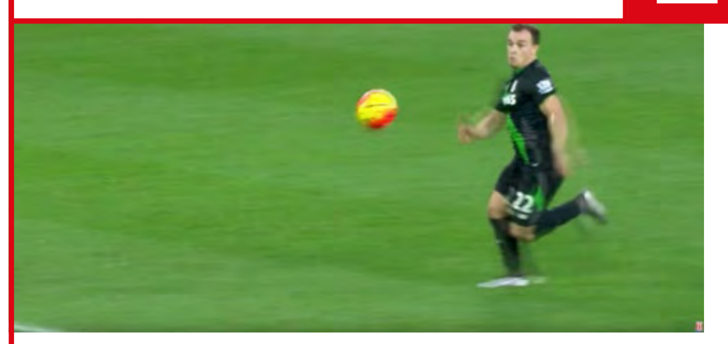
Honduras 0 Switzerland 3
World Cup 2014 group stage
25 June 2014

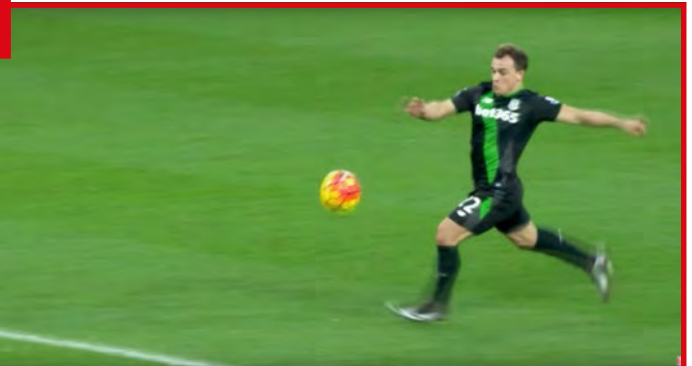
Xherdan Shaqiri will create LFC history when he makes his Reds debut by becoming the first player we've had that has ever scored a World Cup hat-trick. His treble – in a 3-0 victory against Honduras in Brazil 2014 – was also historic as it was the 50th hat-trick scored in a World Cup finals with only Cristiano Ronaldo and Harry Kane adding their names to the illustrious list at World Cup 2018.

A Bayern Munich player at the time, the first of his three was pretty special. Taking a pass close to the right touchline, Shaqiri displayed strength to twice fend off a Honduran defender as he cut inside towards the edge of the box before firing a dipping effort from 25 yards out that glanced into the net off the underside of the crossbar. He signed for Internazionale seven months later.

TOUCH OF CLASS



















Everton 3 Stoke City 4
Premier League
28 December 2015

Signed from Internazionale in the summer of 2015, Shaqiri netted his first two Stoke City goals against the Blues at Goodison Park with his second effort hailed as one of the goals of the season.

Bojan clipped a pass forward from the halfway line that Shaqiri allowed to bounce once as he raced towards it. As he reached the penalty area, with Tim Howard on the edge of his six-yard box, Xherdan sublimely clipped a right-footed half-volley goalwards to send the ball spinning over the helpless Everton keeper before it landed in the far corner.

"It is a brilliant finish," said Liverpool-supporting ex-Wales forward John Hartson on BBC *Final Score*. "That is such a hard skill to do on the run and on the half-volley. He's at full-stretch and weights it perfectly."

ANOTHER ‘NICE’ GOAL!



Switzerland 1 Poland 1
Euro 2016 last sixteen
25 June 2016

Exactly two years to the day since netting his World Cup hat-trick, Shaqiri lit up Euro 2016 with an extraordinary acrobatic strike that was, for many people, the goal of the tournament.

A cross from the right by Arsenal new-boy Stephane Lichtsteiner was only half cleared to the edge of the box, in the direction of Shaqiri. The ball was behind him, but as it dropped he launched himself into the air and connected with it perfectly, twisting his body to send a sizzling bicycle kick zipping past Lukasz Fabianski and in via the inside of the post.

“Shaqiriiiiiiii! Ohhhhhhhh! What. About. That! Stunning. Absolutely stunning,” cried BBC commentator Jonathan Pearce, but there was a humorous rebuke for a reporter who later asked Xherdan if it was the best goal of his career? “You don’t know me very well, obviously,” he quipped. “I always score nice goals!”







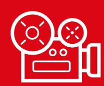












DEADLY DEAD-BALL



Middlesbrough 1 Stoke City 1
Premier League
13 August 2016

Middlesbrough's return to the Premier League was going according to plan when new signing Alvaro Negredo put the home side ahead, but Boro then made the mistake of conceding a free-kick 25 yards out.

Their former Barcelona keeper Victor Valdes lined a wall up to cover his right-hand post and stood towards the other side but was completely deceived when Shaqiri stepped up and sent a curling, swerving across the wall to his left. Having taken a step to his right – in anticipation of where most players would put a free-kick from that angle – Valdes couldn't shift his weight back onto his left foot, and although he got a fingertip to the ball it flew into the net off the inside of the post.

Xherdan's trademark 'arms folded, head nodding' celebration followed seconds later.



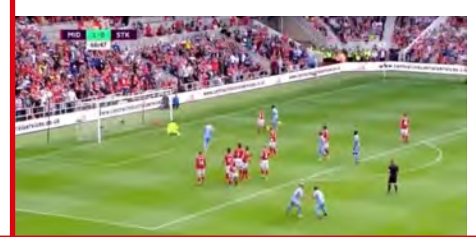














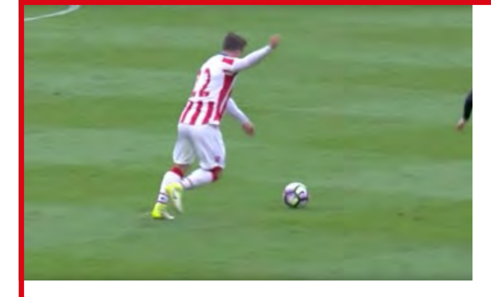
STUNNING STRIKE

Stoke City 3 Hull City 1
Premier League
15 April 2017

Andy Robertson won't particularly want reminding of this stunning strike from 30 yards, but it was yet another example of Shaqiri's devastating power. He hadn't scored since netting twice against the Tigers earlier in the season, but in a match played on the 28th anniversary of Hillsborough he scored another cracker.

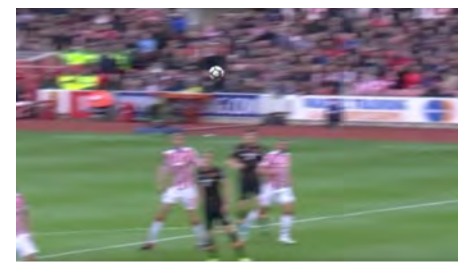
Seeing Shaqiri receive a pass in space 30 yards from goal on the right, Hull left-back Robertson came to charge him down but before he could get there Xherdan had taken aim with his left foot and unleashed a shot that moved in the air before dipping underneath the crossbar, leaving ex-Swiss international keeper Eldin Jakupovic grasping thin air.

It was Shaqiri's fifth consecutive Premier League goal from outside the box and another unstoppable strike.













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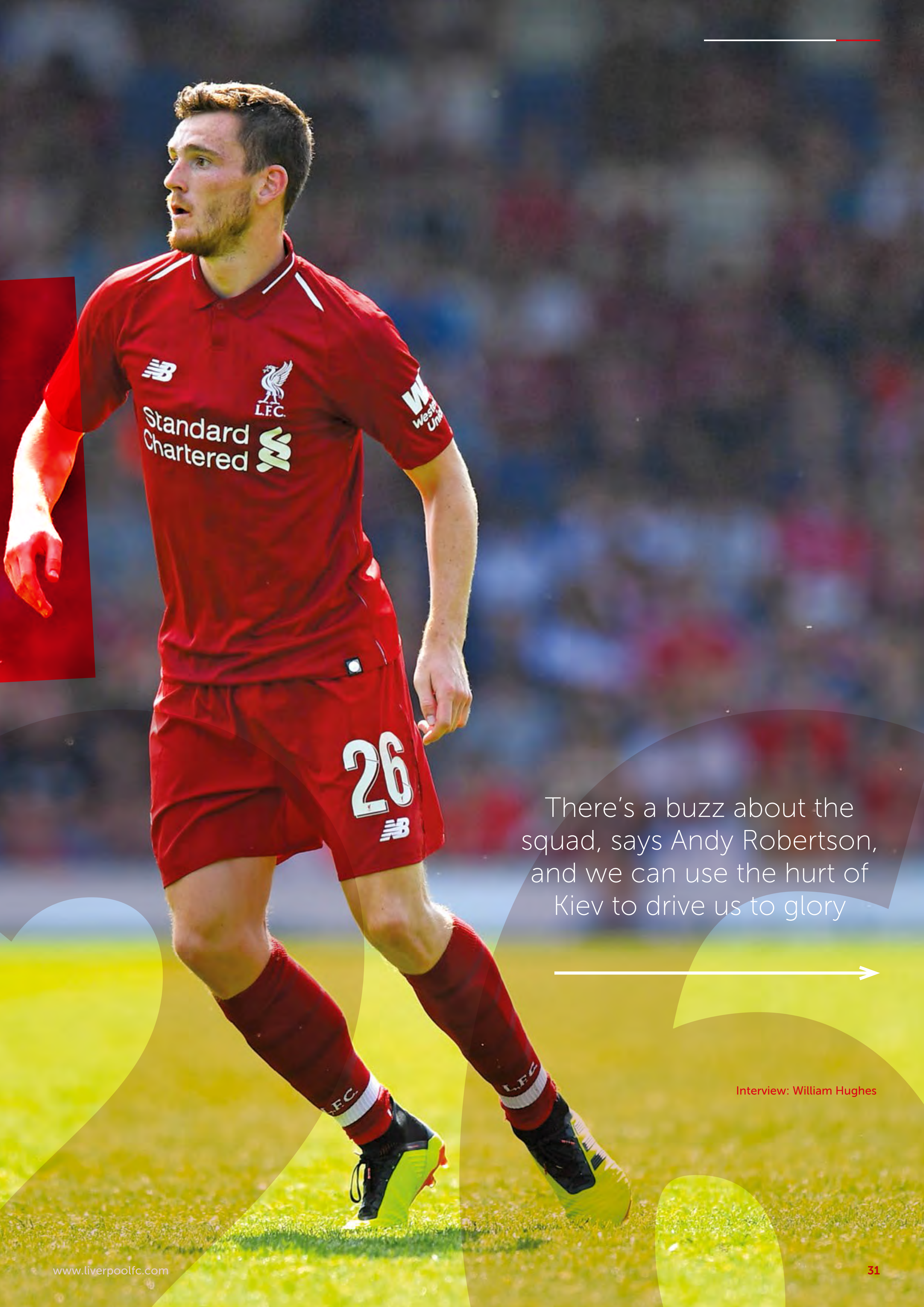
**WE ARE LIVERPOOL.
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HAPPY DAYS

Pre-season training in the summer sunshine can be hard work but Naby Keita seems to be enjoying it. When the grinning Guinea international makes his Reds debut he'll become the first player to wear the LFC no8 shirt since Steven Gerrard in 2015.


GOOD TO GO
www.liverpoolfc.com



There's a buzz about the squad, says Andy Robertson, and we can use the hurt of Kiev to drive us to glory

Interview: William Hughes





Andy, how long did it take you to get over the Champions League final?
I'm probably still not over it, to be honest. I don't think the lads will get over it. It'll be something where you'll always have those 'what ifs' in your head and it could have been a very different outcome. But I think it will get easier to move on from the more games we play.

Pre-season games are so important in terms of fitness but you're not competing for anything, so once the Premier League starts back up and the new Champions League campaign comes around, then hopefully it will get a bit easier. But I think all the lads are still hurting.

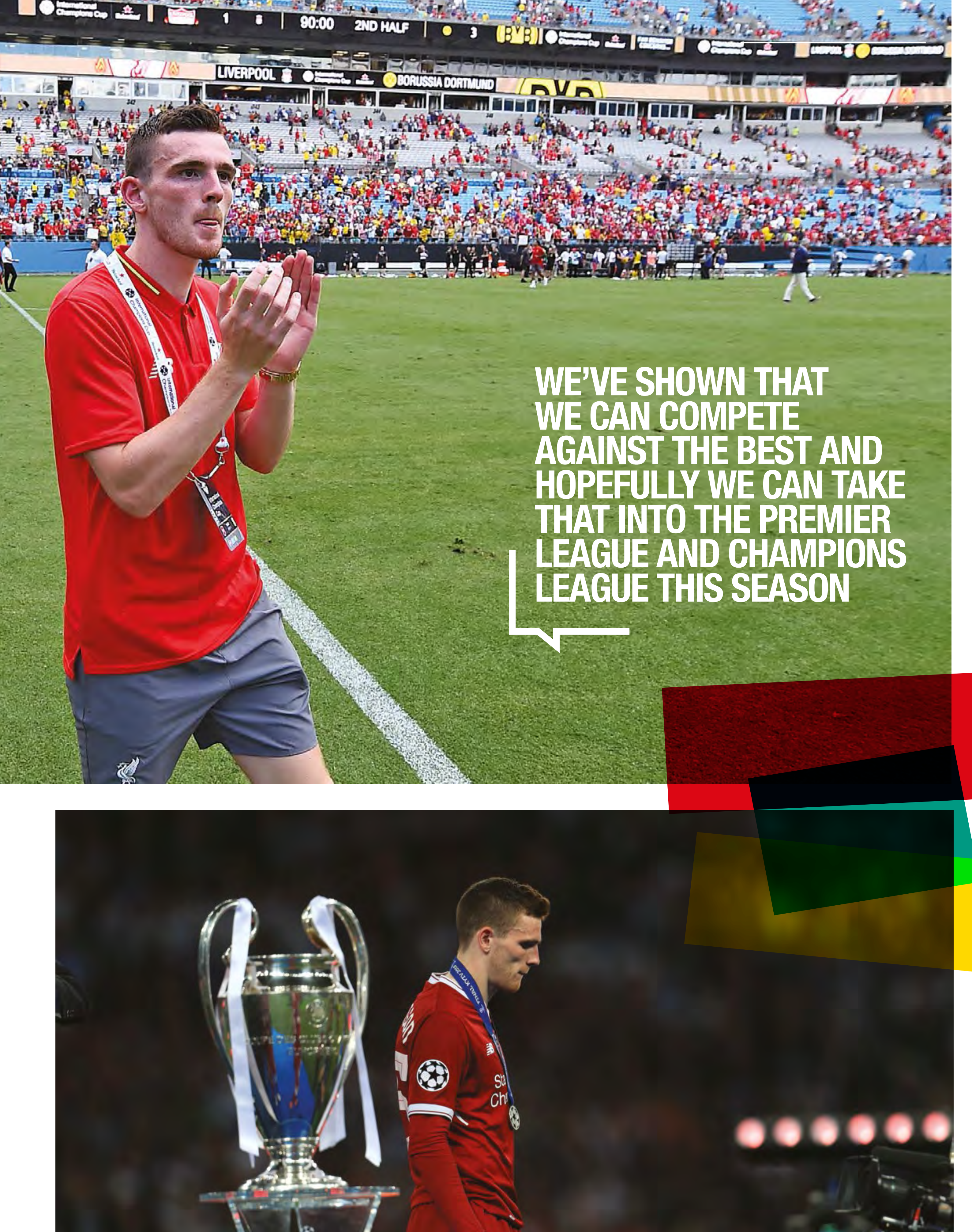
Even so, reaching the final must have provided a huge boost for the squad?
Of course. I don't think anyone expected it except for the lads ourselves. We believed in ourselves and that grew stronger the further we went in the competition.

We felt that we could beat anyone on our day or over a two-legged tie, and it proved that way. I think that maybe the competition and everyone around it started taking notice after the Porto away game when we basically sealed our place in the last eight. Then we drew Manchester City who everyone was saying we needed to avoid if we wanted to get to the final. But we all know what happened in those games and we put in two unbelievable performances to get through.

Probably nobody thought at the very start of the tournament that Liverpool would be there in the final, but we believed in ourselves and hopefully we can take that into this new season.

Does reaching the Champions League final add to the expectations going into this campaign?
Of course. I think when any new player signs for Liverpool, or the longer you are here, you feel those expectations and you know what the fans expect and what everyone else around the club expects.

If you had said at the start of last season that we'd get to the Champions League final, I think a lot of the fans would have bitten your hand off, given the quality of the teams that have been there and done it in the Champions League over the last couple of years when we'd struggled to qualify. But we have shown that we can compete against the best and we can take a lot of confidence from that and hopefully take it into the Premier League and Champions League this season.



WE'VE SHOWN THAT WE CAN COMPETE AGAINST THE BEST AND HOPEFULLY WE CAN TAKE THAT INTO THE PREMIER LEAGUE AND CHAMPIONS LEAGUE THIS SEASON



Pre-season has been a little different for you this season than it was 12 months ago...
It was a weird pre-season last season because it was quite disrupted. I was training with Hull for the first two, two-and-a-half weeks, but I knew I wasn't going to be there for long. So it was hard because a new manager had come in [Leonid Slutsky] and he was setting his team up for another season in the Championship.

I had to be honest with him and at times I had to go off and do my own thing because they were maybe playing pre-season games and I couldn't risk getting injured. I was quite lucky in that there were a few of us in the same boat so we stuck together and trained hard because of course you need to get your fitness up for whatever club you are going to go to. I didn't enjoy that situation but of course when you sign for a club like this it makes it all okay.

This pre-season I'm a lot more settled. I know I can get a full pre-season under my belt and I can really hit the ground running.

And having a full pre-season at Liverpool this time should really benefit you...
I think it will help me massively. I missed the trip to Hong Kong last year and even in terms of bonding with the rest of the squad and so on, I think that was crucial. Obviously Mo was in really early and it was all done and he could enjoy his summer while mine dragged on a wee bit longer. But this season, now that I'm here and I know everybody, I can use that to my advantage and just get ready for the first game of the season. Even after a couple of weeks I felt fit and ready to go and that will only get better as the season approaches.

FOR NEW SIGNINGS, GETTING TO KNOW THE BOYS IN TRAINING IS GOOD, BUT THEN WHEN YOU ACTUALLY GET OUT ON THE PITCH THE BOND BECOMES A LOT STRONGER



So was it important to have Fabinho, Naby Keita and Xherdan Shaqiri on board before the trip to America?
I think that was brilliant for the three of them. With Naby and Fab, they came in and played a couple of games which I feel helped massively. Being around the boys and getting to know them in training is good, but then when you actually get out on the pitch the bond becomes a lot stronger and I think you could already see before we went to the US that they were both getting more comfortable and enjoying it.

I know form personal experience that the first week's quite daunting because you're trying to get used to the surroundings, the staff and the players. But now they've been playing well in games and getting fit so it was good for them to come on the tour and we were able to get a lot closer with being in a hotel 24/7 and so on. That will stand them in good stead for the season ahead and I'm sure that will help us as well.

Is it possible to enjoy pre-season? We've heard how hard the training sessions are!
It was definitely the hardest first ten days of a pre-season that I've had, but it is enjoyable because I could see myself getting fitter all the time.

For instance, even in the short space of time between the Chester and the Tranmere games when we first came back in, against Tranmere I felt so much sharper than I did against Chester. So when you walk off the pitch you know that you're going places, you know that you're getting fitter and you know that you're getting back to where we left off last season.

There are tough days and it is quite hard mentally sometimes when your body's tired, but you need to get through it because at the end of the day you need to be firing on all cylinders come West Ham on the Sunday and we can't leave any stone unturned as such. The staff definitely aren't doing that and we will all keep digging in, but it will be good when pre-season's over!

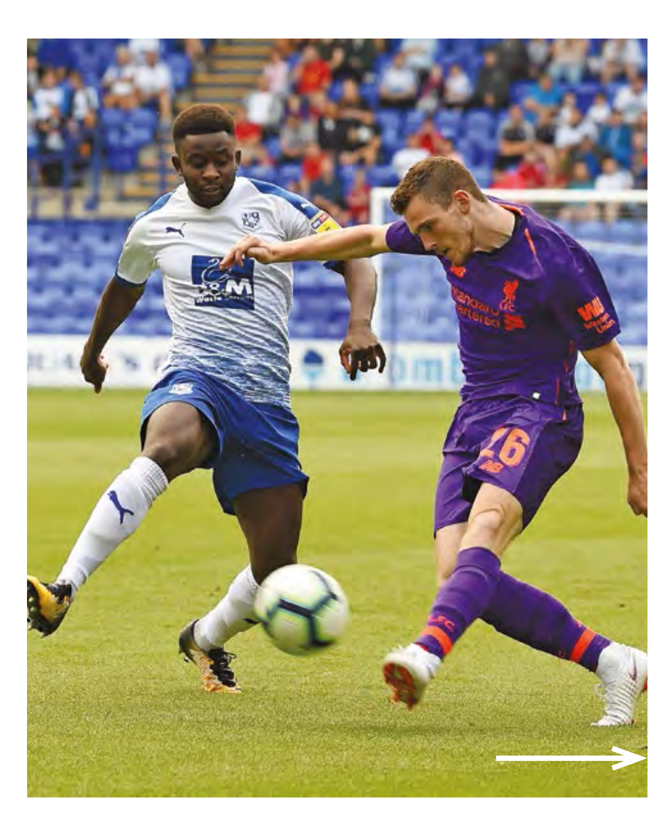
You mention West Ham – is the buzz around the start of a new Premier League season always as big as ever?
All the lads just can't wait for the season to start. Pre-season friendlies are good to get your sharpness up and we've had some great games but it's not the same as going out at Anfield and playing in the Premier League. And once you get back into that competitive nature it's really good.

That's why all the fans, the players and the staff get excited and the countdown's on to that first game of the season. I know every team up and down the country will be the exact same.

This year the club has a final friendly at Anfield against Torino before the Premier League campaign kicks off – will that help?
I think a game at Anfield in front of our fans can get us used to playing at home again. A few of the lads who were at the World Cup went quite deep into the tournament so they'll be back in training quite late, so it'll be good for them to maybe get a game before the season starts.

It's also good for us to get used to our surroundings again, especially the new signings who can get a feel for Anfield before it comes on the Sunday because if it takes you ten to 15 minutes on the Sunday, then that's time you don't really have because we need to be ready to go from the first whistle. It will get them used to the surroundings and it will give us the feeling back of playing at Anfield and then we'll be good to go against West Ham.

The level of performances last season must have helped everybody become more confident that you can win silverware...
Of course. We always believe that we can win trophies at this club and over the last however many years the club hasn't won as many as they would have probably liked. Obviously now we have that




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AFTER THE FINAL WITH MADRID WE'VE ALL BEEN REALLY HUNGRY FOR SUCCESS AND WE CAN USE THAT FEELING TO DRIVE US FORWARD

feeling of going far into a major tournament and coming so close and hopefully we can use that to our advantage.

Last season the FA Cup and the League Cup were probably a disappointment. We were put out quite early in both, and at a club like this we want to win trophies, whether that's the Premier League or the League Cup. All trophies are trophies and we need to try and get that winning mentality of winning trophies.

I think after the game against Madrid, we were all really hungry for success and I just hope that now we can use that feeling to try and drive us forward this season.

Manchester City were runaway winners of the Premier League last season but Liverpool defeated them three times in four meetings across all competitions...

We put in some great performances against City last season. They were in a class above everyone last season and there's no hiding away from that. And it was in games where they might struggle with a potential banana-skin that they were just grinding out one-nil wins and the rest of us teams didn't do it.

With us, for example, Swansea away, Burnley at home and West Brom at home and away all come to mind. We either drew or lost those games and if you want to win titles they're the ones that you need to grind out. If you're losing the game, get a draw and an extra point on the board. If you're drawing, go for the win and an extra two points. They're the games that Man City really made a difference in last season and the amount of goals that they scored quite late-on to win games was a big factor in why they were the best and that's what you need to be champions.

The Premier League's so competitive that anyone can beat anyone on their day and that's where it's different to other leagues because there are games that you really need to dig deep in to get the three points.

There is no Champions League qualifier for the Reds this season – that must be a bonus?

The Hoffenheim games came quite quickly round at the start of last season and I thought the lads dealt with it brilliantly. There was naturally a lot of pressure on them to get into the Champions League and I though they dealt with it really well, but this time to qualify automatically makes it a lot easier and we don't need to worry about the Champions League until mid-September which is good so we can just put our full focus on the Premier League in the first month.

That's obviously an added bonus but then again I suppose last year's experiences gave the lads more competitive games at the very start and got them into the winning mentality, so it can work both ways. But it's clearly better to be automatically in the group stages of the Champions League.

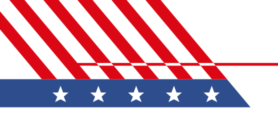
Finally, you must have been thrilled for your defensive colleague Dejan Lovren to have played in the World Cup final...

It was brilliant for him and of course it was just a shame he couldn't have brought a winner's medal back with him. For a country of Croatia's size and with that population [around 4.5 million] it's incredible how they reached the final and what a team they've got. Dejan's been different class and we were all rooting for him.

Obviously we were all disappointed for Hendo and Trent too. I think Hendo had an unbelievable tournament. Some people in the press have doubted him but I just can't see why because he was one of the best players in the England team throughout the campaign.

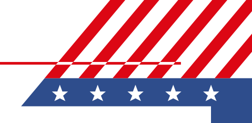
It will be hard for him and Dejan to take after the Champions League and now to have come so close in the World Cup. But despite finishing as runner-up, what an achievement for Dejan.

To get to a World Cup final is just the stuff of dreams.



USA TOUR

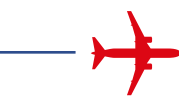
We went to Michigan and Charlotte plus New Jersey on our Tour, and when we played United oh the Redmen they scored four, the Redmen they scored four...



Charlotte NC Bank of America Stadium

New Jersey MetLife Stadium

Ann Arbor Michigan Stadium



Charlotte North Carolina

Sadio is quick, the car is quicker



Nuts! Daniel Sturridge is beaten by Joe Gomez

All you need is Roush: the Reds made a pit-stop at the base of NASCAR team Roush Fenway Racing where they held a contest to see who could replace the tyre-nuts the quickest.



Not sure you'll all fit inside that car, boys



Jürgen had a ball in Charlotte

Charlotte NC Bank of America Stadium

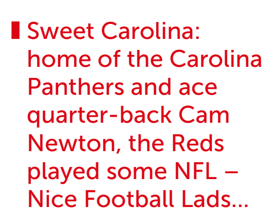
There are worse places to have a sunny workout!



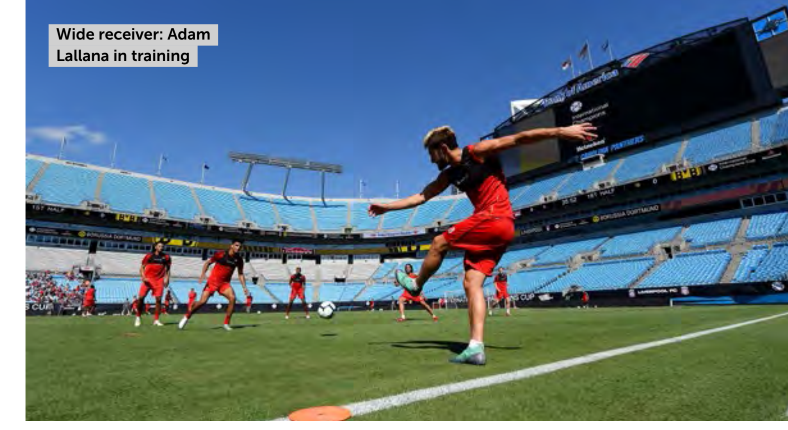
Decent options on the bench



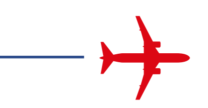
Everything is bigger in the USA, even the rawl plugs



Sweet Carolina: home of the Carolina Panthers and ace quarter-back Cam Newton, the Reds played some NFL – Nice Football Lads...



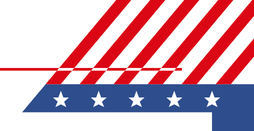
Wide receiver: Adam Lallana in training




YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE
LIVERPOOL
FOOTBALL CLUB
EST·1892



Mighty Red put in an appearance



Thanks Charlotte: although LFC were beaten 3-1 by Borussia Dortmund the players and fans had plenty of fun at the Bank of America Stadium



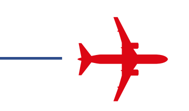
Thumbs up from Studge at full-time



Charlotte Kopites were out in force



Different Continent, same Klopp smile



New York New Jersey

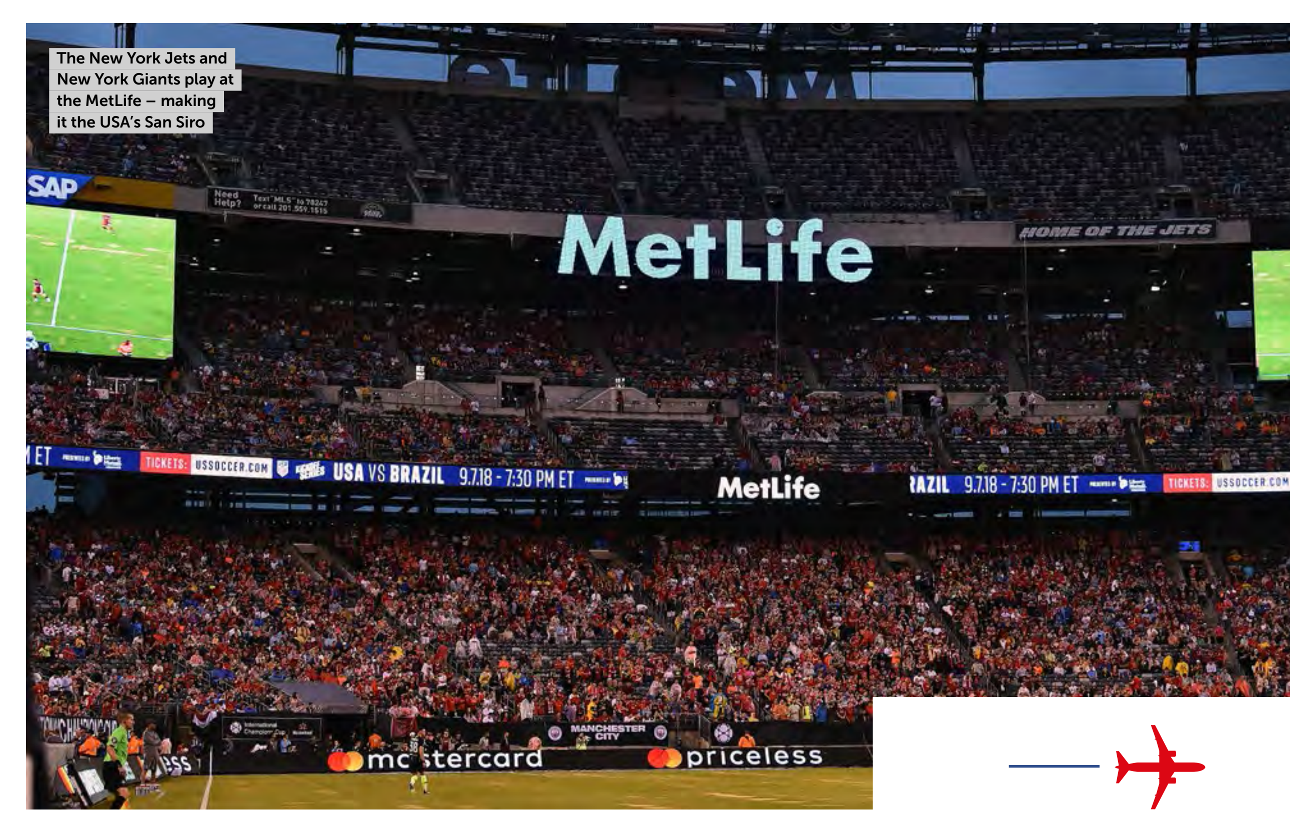


When you really, really want Mo Salah's shirt!

New Jersey
MetLife Stadium

Start spreading the news: Just eight miles out of New York City is the MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, and there were plenty of Reds to see Liverpool take on Manchester City


More fans of the Egyptian King



The New York Jets and New York Giants play at the MetLife – making it the USA's San Siro

~~EATING OUT~~
A DINING EXPERIENCE

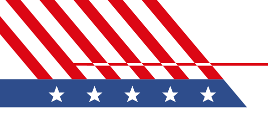


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To book your table visit
liverpoolfc.com/bootroom
or call **0151 906 1892**

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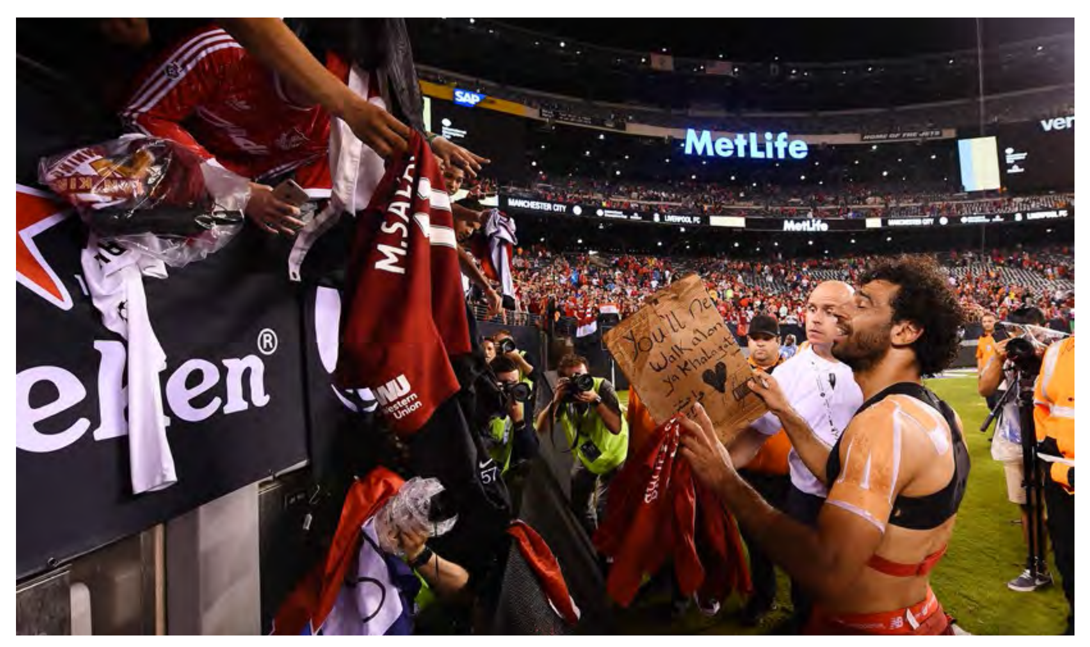


Make USA Dream: boss banners in NJ

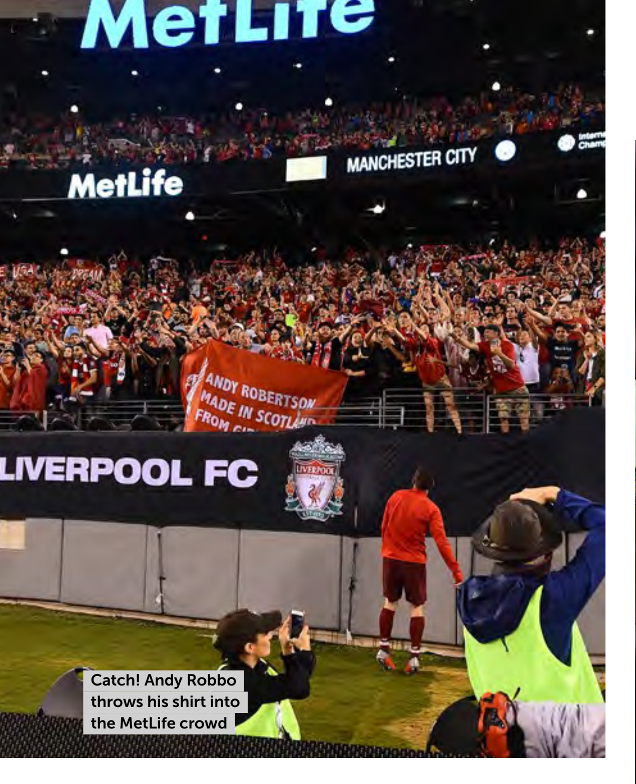


Mo meets his fans

Salah's shirt: turns out the cardboard signs worked and one lucky LFC fan in New Jersey got a new jersey courtesy of Mo Salah who had equalised for the Reds before Sadio Mane netted a stoppage-time penalty-winner



New York Kop



Catch! Andy Robbo throws his shirt into the MetLife crowd

New era: it was only a friendly, but Liverpool's 2-1 victory means we have now four consecutive wins against Man City. It feels like it could be the start of quite a rivalry in 2018/19...



Pep Guardiola must be sick of seeing Mo!

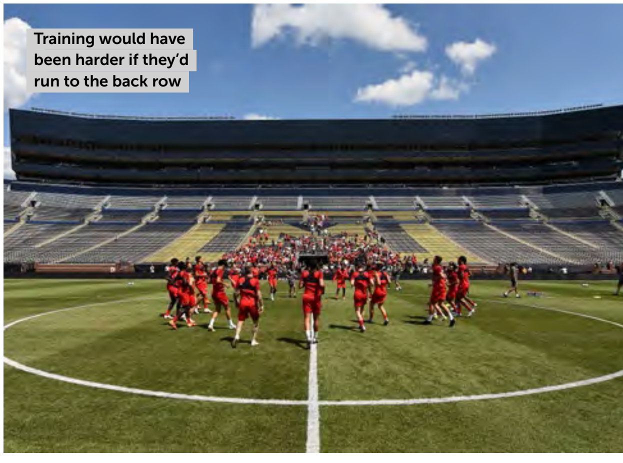

Please
STAY OFF
THE FIELD!

Ann Arbor Michigan

Checking in: Andy Robertson

Ann Arbor
Michigan Stadium

Man U mission: the final stop for Liverpool was Michigan to take on Manchester United in the 'Big House' – the second-largest stadium in the world


Training would have been harder if they'd run to the back row



Mo waves – but which way did the LFC coach drive to Michigan?



Our lads come from all over the place



Jamie Webster gets 'Allez Allez Allez' going at a pre-match BOSS Night party

Big House, big win: a crowd of 101,254 attended the Michigan Stadium to witness Liverpool beat Manchester United 4-1 with Sadio Mane, Daniel Sturridge, Sheyi Ojo and Xherdan Shaqiri all on target. It was the perfect way to end a brill US Tour... now bring on the new season!



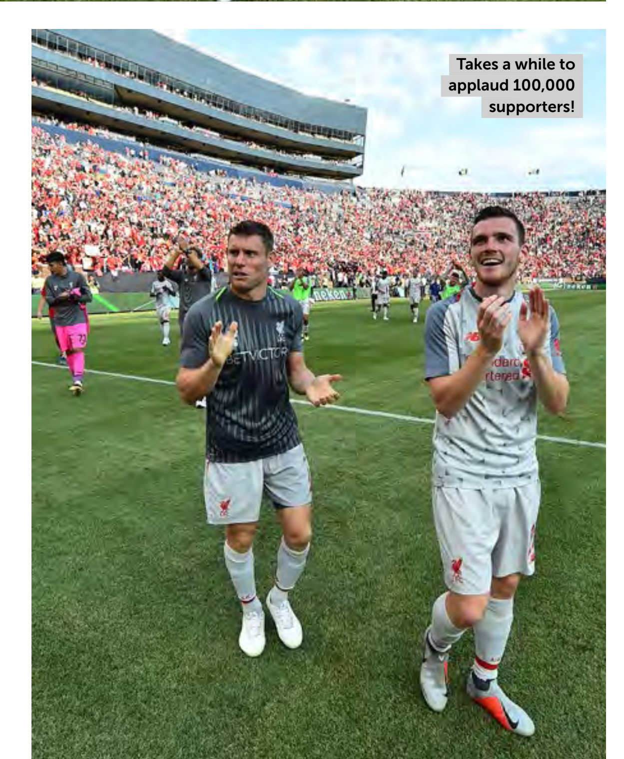
This is why they call it the Big House – it's rather big!



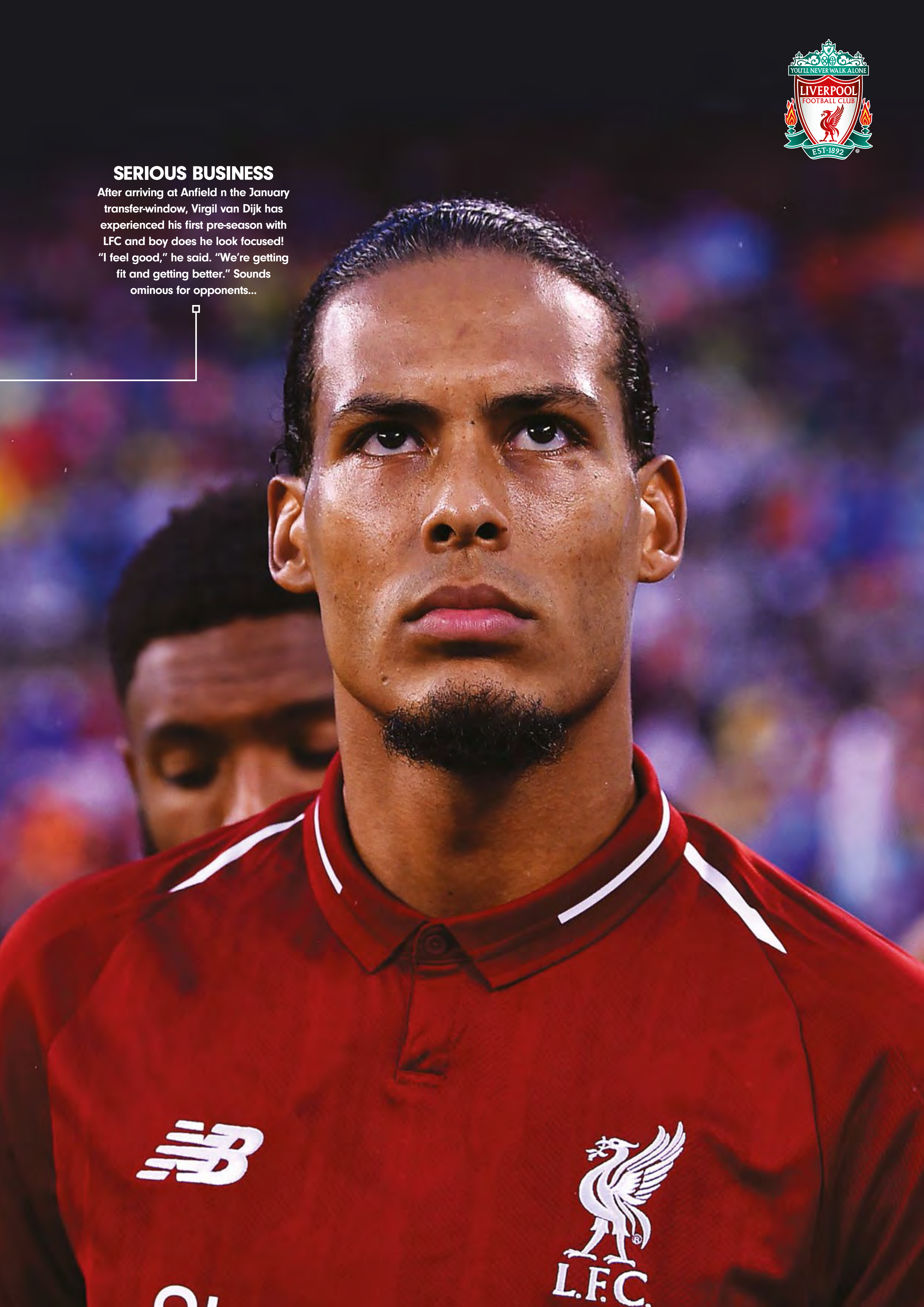
Virgil and Alberto have a laugh



Sheyi Ojo takes the congrats after netting


Takes a while to applaud 100,000 supporters!


A bicycle-kick goal against Man United in his first game – no wonder he's smiling!



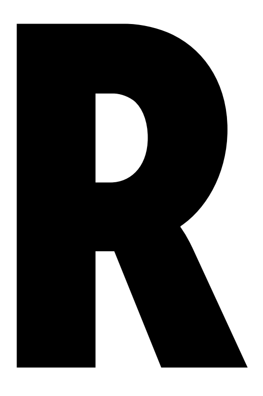
SERIOUS BUSINESS

After arriving at Anfield n the January transfer-window, Virgil van Dijk has experienced his first pre-season with LFC and boy does he look focused! "I feel good," he said. "We're getting fit and getting better." Sounds ominous for opponents...


L.F.C.
Standard
Chartered

“I want to make it at Liverpool”

Rhian Brewster’s excitement shines through as the young star says yes to a new deal



hian Brewster could have left Liverpool Football Club this summer. Despite being on the sidelines since January following ankle-surgery, the 18-year-old striker had no shortage of admirers well-aware that the Londoner – who moved to the Academy from Chelsea in 2014 – was yet to sign a professional contract.

But after considering his options the England youth international, a FIFA U17 World Cup-winner in 2017, opted to commit his long-term future to Liverpool because he feels, well so at home.

“I’ve wanted to do this for a very long time now and I think it’s the right moment for me and my family,” he told LFCTV. “I just wanted the opportunity to make it at Liverpool. Of course you have to look elsewhere sometimes and maybe somewhere else is a better place for you. [But] I think Liverpool is the place for me.

“Since I got here the club has been amazing to me and treated me like family. It seems like I’ve been here my whole life, to be honest. It’s coming up to my fifth season now. I remember my first training session. It’s amazing and I can’t wait to get started.”

Rhian netted five Premier League 2 goals and one in the UEFA Youth League last season before an ankle injury suffered against Manchester City ended his campaign in January. The talented teenager admits it will be a while before he’s in action again.

“I’ve been out for about six months now and it’s quite far down the line. I’m hoping to be back by around Christmas. Hopefully by then I should be back fit and fighting for my place in the team.”

When he does return to fitness he’ll be training full-time at Melwood as a fully-fledged senior squad member and has been visualising what it would be like to score for the Reds at a packed Anfield.

“I’ve had so many dreams and pictures in my head of what I want it to look like. Hopefully this season coming, it can happen. Scoring in front of the Kop, the fans going crazy and shouting my name. Hopefully it can happen this season.

“Ultimately this is a great team that I want to be a part of. Not just being a number but a face of the team is hopefully what I can do. Getting back fit and fighting-fit is what I want to do in the upcoming season, and prove to everyone I am good enough.”




L.F.C.
BETVICTOR



HARRY'S AIM

Exciting young attacker **HARRY WILSON** has joined Derby County on loan - but only after signing a new long-term contract with the Reds - and this is why

Words: William Hughes

Throughout May and June, the transfer-rumour websites were awash with stories linking Harry Wilson with a permanent move to a host of Premier League, Championship and Scottish Premier League clubs.

Yet any Reds supporter who understands Klopp-era Liverpool FC would have dismissed them for the clickbait that they were.

Just four days after the 21-year-old Welsh international had started pre-season with two goals in the 7-0 win at Chester FC, he agreed fresh terms on a long-term contract with LFC. A week or so later he agreed to spend the 2018/19 season on loan at Derby County, taking the next step of his career path under the tutelage of former England and Chelsea ace Frank Lampard.

Wilson, a former Under-23s captain and a prolific goalscorer at academy-level, has been with Liverpool since the age of nine. A productive loan-spell with Hull City in the second half of last season saw him

score seven goals in 13 Championship appearances.

Key to Harry's willingness to commit his long-term future to the Reds is Jürgen Klopp's proven record of affording opportunities to gifted young players. Trent Alexander-Arnold enjoyed an outstanding 2017/18, while several other teenagers have been given exposure at first-team level since the German was appointed manager in October 2015.

On the club's website Wilson explained: "The manager here has shown in the past that he is willing to give young players a chance, and I think the young players that he's given a chance to so far have proved him right.

"You look at Trent last season, especially, coming in and doing so well in the team. And for him to give me this contract early on in pre-season, that gives me a lot of confidence and I'm hoping I can keep impressing him.

"When I moved up to Melwood eighteen months or so ago, straightaway he made me feel welcome. He's very easy to approach and, when he talks to you, he gives you honest advice and it makes you feel good because that's what you want when you go and speak to a manager. You want him to be honest with you, tell you where you are, and he does that, definitely."

With the constant speculation about whether Wilson would stay or go, he admits it was a relief to sign a new deal so soon after returning to training following the summer break. "I'm delighted. When it was offered to me I was desperate to get everything sorted so I could sign it fairly early on in pre-season because I want to focus on playing football. So, now this is sorted, I feel I can do that and push on and try and impress."

The contract comes just six months after he put pen to paper on his previous agreement with the Reds. "I think that shows the faith the club have in me. The [contract] I signed before going out on loan, I wanted to get it signed so I could go out and prove to people that I could do it out on loan.

THE MANAGER HERE HAS SHOWN IN THE PAST THAT HE IS WILLING TO GIVE YOUNG PLAYERS A CHANCE, AND I THINK THE YOUNG PLAYERS THAT HE'S GIVEN A CHANCE TO SO FAR HAVE PROVED HIM RIGHT



"I felt Hull was a great move for me. I got the minutes that I needed, the goals and assists were a bonus. So to come back and for the club to offer me a new deal so early on in the pre-season, it was great for me."

Harry, who has five senior caps for Wales, believes his three-and-a-half month spell at the KCOM Stadium represented an important stage in his development. He was just 18 when he had his previous spell away from the club, playing seven league games for Crewe Alexandra in 2015.

"It was a massive positive. When Hull came in, although it was late on in the transfer window, I couldn't wait to get out there. It's a great club. The fans were brilliant with me from the start. The management staff and the players welcomed me in and I felt part of the group straightaway.

"So when the games started coming around and I started getting the minutes I wanted, I think everything worked out well. As I say, to score the goals I did and [get] the assists and to help the club climb the table a little bit, it was all a massive plus for me."

Back in March he celebrated his 21st birthday by scoring his first international goal – a brilliantly-taken curling effort – in a 6-0 China Cup win against the hosts in Nanning, a game which also saw the Reds' Champions League nemesis Gareth Bale score a hat-trick for Wales.

"No matter what level you score a goal at, it's always nice, it's always a great feeling," he says. "But with the fans, when you do score and you hear the fans roar and the joy you bring to them, it makes it extra-special. To do it on the international stage, as I did on my birthday as well, that was a special moment.

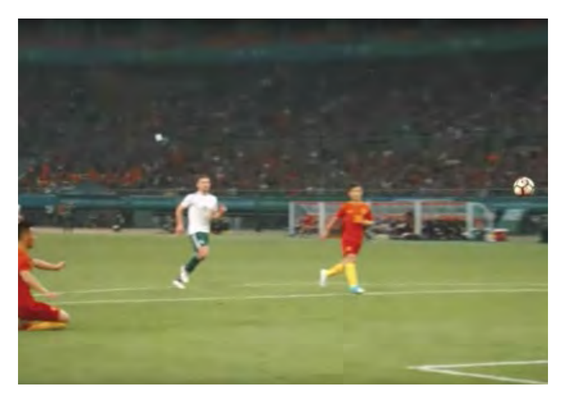
"Born and raised in Wales, I always wanted to play for my country, and to get my debut at a young age [he is the country's youngest player after making his bow aged 16 years 207 days] it made me want it even more. To get my first start earlier on in the China Cup along with my first goal – and I've had three starts since – that has just made me want to stay in that Welsh shirt, be in the team all the


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Harry curls in his first goal for Wales during a 6-0 win over China last March











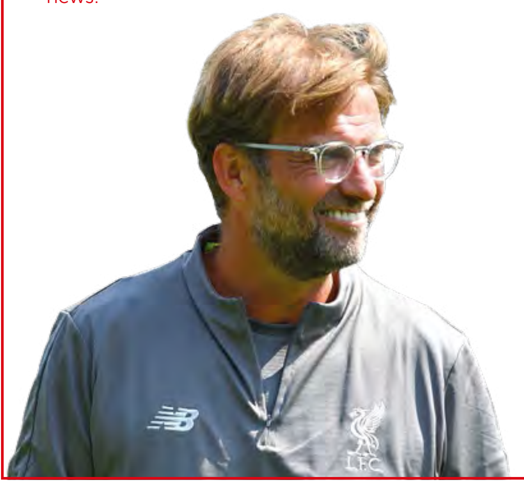




THE NOSE FOR A GOAL

Jürgen Klopp was delighted to see Wilson pledge his future to Liverpool, and the boss is now looking forward to see how he continues to improve in the years to come.

He says: "Harry's development in the last few years is really exceptional so of course we had to keep the boy! Now we see what we do with that, but it's really good that his long-term future is, for sure, at Liverpool. He's a finisher, which is the most difficult thing to learn, he has the nose for a goal, if you want. [It's] good news."



time and hopefully take Wales on and on."

Scoring in the Championship at a better ratio than one-every-two-games has also boosted the Wrexham-born attacker's self-confidence.

"It definitely gives you a boost. A few young lads might think they're ready then they go out [on loan] and have a bit of a shock. But when you go there, first of all you've got to show the manager [at Hull, Nigel Adkins] that he can trust you in the starting eleven in a competitive game to do the work that he wants you to do.

"Then, when you're there, you've got to enjoy it and try and help the team as much as you can: if you're a defender, that's defending the goal; if you're an attacker, that's scoring them. If you can prove first and foremost to the manager that he can trust you when you go out on the pitch, I think it's all good."

While helping the Tigers stay out of danger of relegation was Wilson's prime focus after leaving for Humberside, he admits that he was delighted to see the strides taken by his parent club.

"It was brilliant to see how well the team did last season, especially in the Champions League. Although at the end it wasn't meant to be, the performances that we put in and the results we got on the way to the final were brilliant for any Liverpool fan to watch. After going to European nights as a kid and seeing the atmosphere, to have them back they feel just as special. To be involved in one of those at some stage would be a special moment for me."

For now, however, his focus is on continuing to learn his trade at Pride Park under Lampard, who knew a thing or two about hitting the back of the net.

Talking to *RamsTV,* he explained: "To sign a new deal with a club as big as Liverpool was brilliant for me. I sat down with the right people and discussed what they felt would be best for me this season. We decided that a loan move would be.

"Liverpool always want the best for their players so between me, Liverpool and my agent, we decided to narrow it down to a few teams. Derby were one of them and come the end of it we decided this would definitely be the right place for me."

Harry has also acknowledged that the chance to work with Lampard was a persuasive factor. "That is a big attraction. Seeing the career he had as a player, the things he has done in the game have been brilliant. I'm really looking forward to getting into training and learning a lot of things from him."





Liverpool leavers

Harry Wilson is one of several Reds making a move this summer...

Ryan Kent to Rangers: flying winger Ryan signed a new contract with LFC in 2017 before going on loan to SC Freiburg and Bristol City. He'll now continue his development at Ibrox where boss Steven Gerrard is assisted by ex-Reds Under-23s manager Mick Beale. "He got the best out of me in Under-23s football at Liverpool," said 21-year-old Kent, "so I think this is a really exciting move."

Ovie Ejaria to Rangers: the 20-year-old winger committed his future to LFC this summer by penning a new long-term contract. He's since added to the Reds contingent at Rangers by moving on a season-long loan, but retains the same career goal: "I really want to be a regular at Liverpool Football Club, a massive club, so that's my aim."

Adam Bogdan to Hibernian: a serious injury suffered on loan at Wigan Athletic means Hungarian keeper Adam hasn't played a first-team game since November 2016 so has moved to Hibs on loan to get his career back on track. "It was a rollercoaster, emotionally and fitness-wise as well," he admitted. "It's a chance to get back to training and playing."

Taiwo Awoniyi to Gent: the Nigerian forward has been with the Reds since 2015 and recently signed a new contract but will now spend a fourth season out on loan with KAA Gent in Belgium. The 20-year-old is no stranger to Belgian football having netted ten goals in 31 games for Royal Excel Mouscron, a club located near the border with France, last season.

Allan Rodrigues de Souza to Eintracht Frankfurt: a 2015 signing from Internacional – the club Alisson began his career at – Brazilian midfielder Allan has previously had four spells away from Liverpool on loan and will now have a fifth with Eintracht in Germany. Before he left, though, the 21-year-old also signed a new long-term contract with LFC.

Shamal George to Tranmere Rovers: Liverpool FC Academy goalkeeper Shamal recently extended his contract with the club and the 20-year-old is spending the first half of season 2018/19 at neighbouring Tranmere Rovers following their return to the Football League. "We are looking forward to seeing more of what he has to offer and helping him grow as player here," says Rovers boss Micky Mellon.

THE LONG GOODBYE

Emre Can's move to Juventus finally happened after 167 LFC appearances and 14 goals in four seasons. "It was a big honour for me to play for Liverpool," he wrote on Instagram. "I hope to see you one day again."

Jon Flanagan also exited, joining the Stevie G project at Rangers after 51 games here and one goal – a thumper in the 5-0 win at Spurs of December 2013. "Stevie was a massive influence on me coming here [to Rangers]," he said, "it was a no-brainer for me."

Alisson's Anfield arrival persuaded Welsh international goalkeeper Danny Ward it was time to move on and it won't be long until the 25-year-old could face the Reds as we travel to Leicester City on 1 September. Ironically the most recent of his three LFC appearances was against the Foxes in the Carabao Cup last season.

Still between the posts, Cumbrian-born Andy Firth, who spent over a decade at the Academy, has now moved to National League club Barrow AFC. "I am truly grateful for everything the club has done for me," he tweeted. "I'll take these memories and experiences with me till the day I die."

Meanwhile young striker Yan Dhanda has joined Swansea City in the quest for first-team football, and attacking midfielder Paulo Alves has joined the Portuguese revolution at newly-promoted Wolves, initially with their Under-23s side.



Above are confirmed transfers ahead of this magazine going to print, with more departures possible ahead of the 9 August transfer deadline


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BETVICTOR
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NEXT GEN

Meet Curtis Jones and Rafael Camacho – two outstanding young prospects knocking on the door of a formidable first-team squad



Interview: Chris McLoughlin

For 18-year-old winger Rafa Camacho and 17-year-old midfielder Curtis Jones, pre-season at Liverpool FC has been very different.

For the first time both teenagers have spent this all-important period as part of Jürgen Klopp's squad, training with the first-team at Melwood instead of their fellow youngsters at The Academy in Kirkby. It's a barometer of their progression.

Last season Lisbon-born Camacho (a Portuguese Under-17 international) and Toxteth-born Jones (England U-17 regular) were part of the senior squad on a number of occasions and both were unused substitutes during the Merseyside derby draw at Goodison Park in April.

They were both also key members of the Steven Gerrard-managed Under-19s who reached the quarter-finals of the UEFA Youth League, knocking out Manchester United along the way only to be beaten by Man City on penalties in the last eight.

Jones netted 18 goals from midfield for the U18s and U19s last season while Camacho was on target 14 times, including a hat-trick against Blackburn Rovers.

So with both teenagers now giving their all to impress Klopp during pre-season, the magazine's Chris McLoughlin sat down with them at Melwood to see how they've been getting on...





IN THE FIRST TEAM SQUAD THE TEMPO IS A LOT QUICKER AND YOU'VE GOT TO BE A BETTER PLAYER ON THE BALL

How exciting is it to be having a full pre-season with the first-team squad and how different is pre-season at Melwood compared to The Academy?

RAFA: It's been a really great opportunity to come and impress the manager and the team, to show what I can do. Even when you're not here at Melwood you know it is going to be different and it has been. Knowing you are coming in every day to train with the first-team is really good.

CURTIS: The standard is obviously a big difference. The players in every position are good on the ball under pressure – that's without a doubt – and then there's the intensity. The tempo is definitely a lot quicker and both on and off the ball you've got to be more aware, use your head a lot more. You've definitely got to be a better player on the ball here.

How much has your development been accelerated by training with the first-team?

CURTIS: Definitely a lot. I'm sure Raf will say the same, but when you've trained here and then drop back down to play in Under-18s and Under-23s games you find them a lot easier. You get yourself into better spaces and you're better on the ball. Because you find those spaces you also get more time on the ball.

RAFA: I would say I feel like a more improved player for being here, only because the standard is so high with the first-team that you have to push yourself more. Like Curtis said, once you go back to the Academy it feels a lot easier.

You must learn plenty on the training pitch from certain individuals you're working alongside?

CURTIS: You learn a lot. For me, I look more at the players in my position. That's really good for me because I've got the likes of Milly and Hendo to learn from – players with a lot of experience.

If you look at Milly he's had a long career in the Premier League so to be able to pick up on the things he does...it really does help me. With Hendo I've been looking at how he has been playing in the World Cup and he has played such a big part for England. I need to keep looking at players like him and Milly because, like I said, it has helped me a lot.

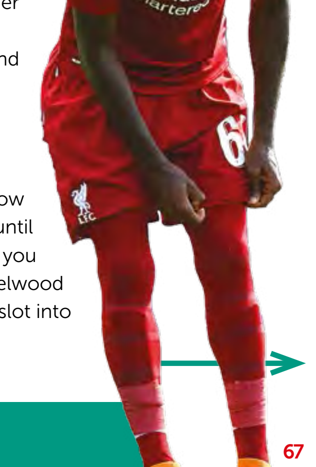
RAFA: Because I'm a winger I tend to look more at Salah and Mane. I try to pick up things from them on what they do, even just from the drills in training. Just being here means I can also ask them about anything they can teach me.

For any Liverpool supporters who haven't seen you both play yet, how would you describe yourselves?

RAFA: I'd probably say I'm a flying winger who likes creating chances for the team, scoring goals and getting assists. I also work hard on and off the ball.

CURTIS: I'm a bit different to Raf because I can play in a variety of positions. I can play as an attacking midfielder and when I play there I like to get on the ball, to dribble and do a lot of skills. I've got an eye for goal and I want to score goals, assist and create. I can also play as a deeper midfielder where I get on the ball when it is played out from the back, pass it and work hard to regain the ball to get the team going again.

At such a young age I think it's good for me to be able to play in different positions as you never know where the best position for you is until you actually get to the level where you want to be. For me coming into Melwood it's been good as I've been able to slot into both positions here.



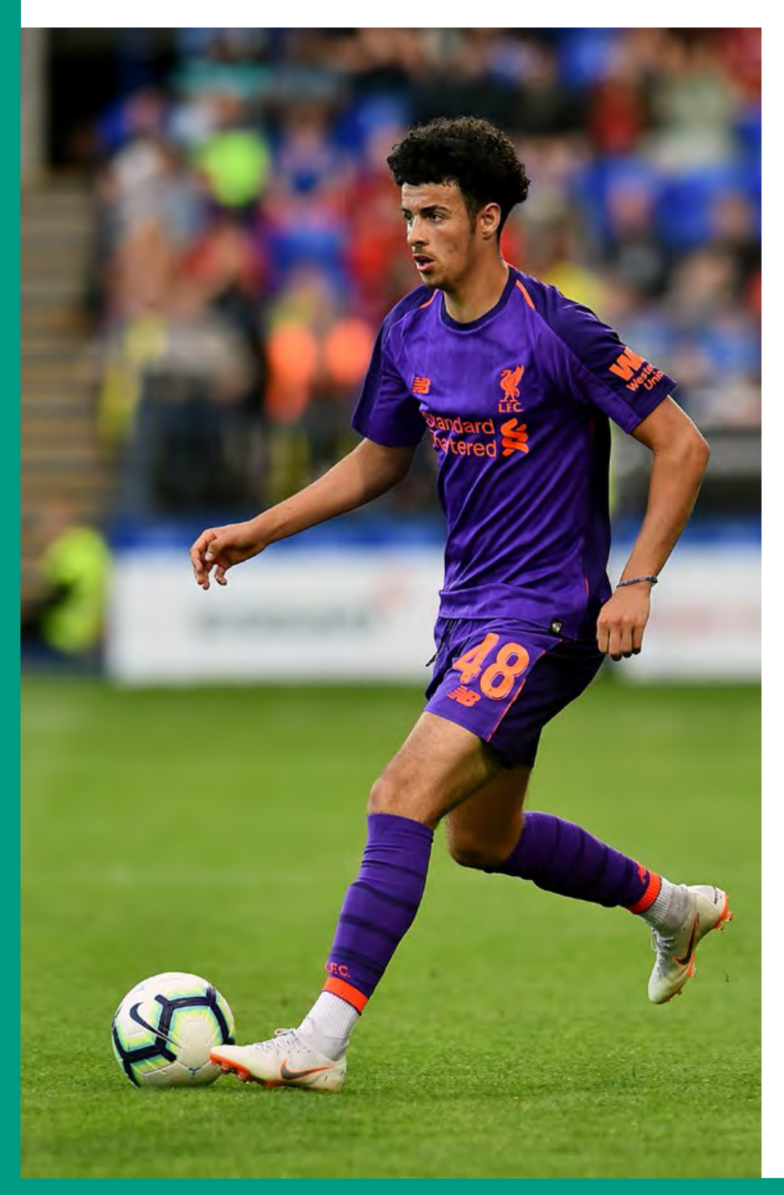
Both of you were in a number of first-team squads last season and travelled away with the team in the Champions League – What were those experiences like?

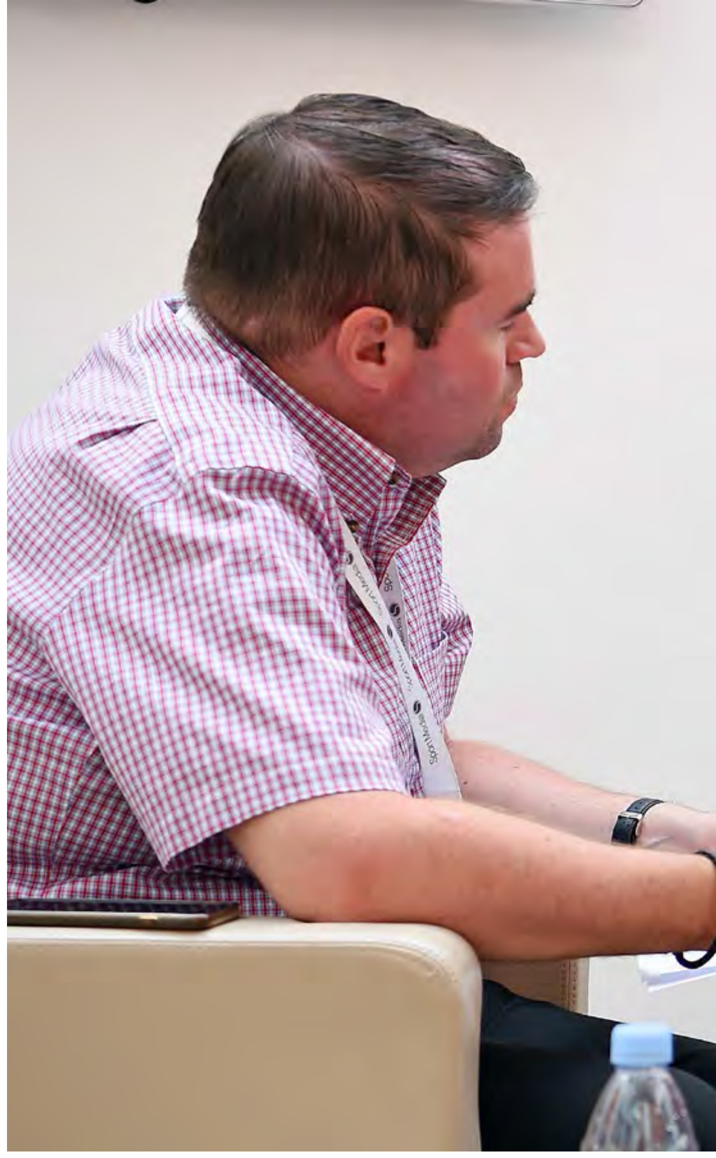
RAFA: It was unbelievable. To be as young as we are and be part of the experience the team was going through in the Champions League, the Premier League, everything was on another level. It gives you confidence going through that and belief that you can be there if you work hard enough.

CURTIS: Going to Rome for the Champions League semi-final was unbelievable. Being there and being around the lads before the game, after the game and getting to celebrate with them gives you a taste or what we're aiming for. It gives you the belief and makes you think that maybe in a few more years we might not be that far away from saying we're an important part of a great Liverpool squad ourselves.

You looked like you were taking a few decent photos and videos on the Stadio Olimpico pitch at the end, Curtis...

CURTIS: Haha yeah! I've had a few people say that! But for me, being a local lad, getting to soak those celebrations in and keep them as memories was great.





Only a few local lads get to experience winning a Champions League semi-final with Liverpool so it was an unbelievable night.

And then came the Champions League final in Kiev...

CURTIS: Again, that was an unbelievable experience to be part of the squad for a Champions League final, despite the result. Myself and Raf knew we wouldn't be on the bench, but being young lads around the squad, watching how they built up to a Champions League final, was an experience and we saw how different players get themselves going ahead of such a big game.

You were both on the bench for the first time for the derby at Goodison Park...

RAFA: Being on the bench for that game in the Premier League makes me want to experience it more. It makes me want to work hard and give everything I've got to actually be able to play in the team in a big game like that.

CURTIS: As a local lad just being around Liverpool Football Club is a massive thing for me – it's a dream for any lad coming from the city. So to be on the bench for the game between two Scouse teams was massive for me.

Hopefully in the future I'll get a chance to get on the pitch in such a game, but it was surreal warming up on the

touchline. We know how the opposition fans are in regard to our team when the Liverpool lads are warming up and it was loud!

Did you get any stick from the Blues fans?

CURTIS: D'ya know what, I never got any stick myself and I was quite surprised as coming from Liverpool I thought I might have got the odd shout! But it was alright.

AS A WINGER I LOOK AT SALAH AND MANE, EVEN FROM DRILLS IN TRAINING WHEN I CAN ASK THEM ABOUT THINGS THEY CAN TEACH ME







The UEFA Youth League was a competition you both played in for Liverpool last season. What was that like?

RAFA: It was my first time playing in it, to be fair, and I didn't know how it was going to be, but it was very enjoyable. We had a very good group, a very good team and a very good manager as well. Everyone had one thing in their mind going into the UEFA Youth League: we knew we wanted to go as far as we could and it was a very competitive tournament.

It was good to be part of that team but unfortunately we didn't go as far as we thought we could have done, going out in the quarter-final on penalties.

CURTIS: We came across the best kids of our age from around the world so I think we can learn a lot from that as in the future we could come across them lads again at a higher level because that's how football works. We played some very quick teams who were good in different ways.

Looking ahead to the new season, have you set yourselves any personal targets?

RAFA: First of all, your targets have to start with pre-season. You have to enjoy it, but obviously at the same time you've got to try to impress the manager so that you get chances.

Once you get to a game and you're given that chance you've got to be yourself, do what you did to get your chance in the first place. Some of the players coming back late from the World Cup gives more space for the rest of us to play and we've got to make the most of that.

CURTIS: I'm thinking the same as Raf – that both of us have a massive chance in pre-season with some of the lads being away and coming back late from the World Cup. When I looked at how big the squad is going to be when all those players came back I thought I need to go out there and show what I'm made of this pre-season, that when everyone is here I can still be counted on.

Going away on tour to different countries and playing different teams in different circumstances also helps you as a young player, because when you get to the stage you want to be at, you've already had that experience.

You mentioned the World Cup, so how inspiring was it to see Trent Alexander-Arnold be part of the England squad having only really broken into the Liverpool team last season...

CURTIS: I'm a local lad the same as Trent so for me there is nothing better than seeing a lad come through The

YOUNG PLAYERS KNOW THE MANAGER WILL GIVE THEM A CHANCE IF THEY PLAY WELL ENOUGH

THERE IS NOTHING BETTER THAN SEEING SOMEONE LIKE TRENT COME THROUGH AND DO SO WELL

Academy, do so well and see how the fans have taken to him. I'm a massive fan myself so to be able to see one of my own team-mates go through this makes me feel made up for him, but it also makes me think I'm in a similar situation myself being from Liverpool and being around the first-team. Trent is definitely the player I look up to.

Does his progress also show to you both how important it is to have a Liverpool manager who will give younger players first-team opportunities?
RAFA: Yes, because not just us both but every young player at The Academy wants to show what they can do because they know if they are good enough the manager will give them a chance to play a part. Play well enough and you might get your opportunity here.



Pep Lijnders has returned to the coaching set-up this summer – pleased to see him back?
CURTIS: I'm made-up that Pep is back. I had a chance to work with Pep when I was in the U14s and I was given a chance to play for the U16s when he was the coach so I know what he is all about. I know how he trains us and I'm happy that he's back.
RAFA: I haven't worked with Pep a lot previously, but in the training sessions I've had with him I know he is very active. I'm happy that he is back because he works with the youngsters that are coming up through the ranks and he's very helpful to us.

Finally, if we sat down here at Melwood again in 12 months' time, how would you both hope that 2018/19 has worked out for you?
RAFA: Yeah in 12 months' time I want to be playing a big part in the Premier League and the cup games for Liverpool. I want to be getting minutes on the pitch.
CURTIS: In 12 months' time I definitely want to be saying that I am a big part of the first-team squad. I think being young and so determined to make the first-team, you can only hope that you do your best, show your level and that you've got what it takes to get into the first-team. You can only imagine being where you want to be, but over the next year I want to be a big part of the first-team squad here at Liverpool.



SPANISH SKIPPER

Pictured here playing in the USA, Alberto Moreno is still buzzing after captaining LFC for the first time in an earlier pre-season win at Chester: "Everyone knows it was a friendly game but for me it was like a cup final. Being able to wear the armband and be captain of Liverpool is a massive deal for me."


BL
L.F.C.

PRIVILEGED

That's how **Barry Lewtas** describes his new role as successor to Steven Gerrard as Under-18s coach – and here's his vision in his own words

Interview: William Hughes **Photography:** Nick Taylor

MY JOURNEY TO NOW

I joined Wigan Athletic when I was in my early 20s. I'd been coaching at soccer schools and balancing that with doing a university degree. When you're at university you've got to find ways of paying you way through, but if you can do it by doing something you're enjoying that's even better.

I probably started thinking about it more seriously as I was going through my coaching badge. Then I got the opportunity to go to Wigan which was fantastic. I was working with a couple of more experienced coaches from whom I learnt an awful lot just in terms of being around them and seeing how they put on sessions.

At the time the club was in League One, then they got promoted to the Championship and the Premier League so it was a great journey. Then I had the opportunity to move to Bolton Wanderers. At the time they had become an established Premier League club and their academy had a reputation of getting boys around the first team, so it was a chance I couldn't turn down.

Again, I was around good people, listening and taking on board as much as I could. I felt at Bolton that it was becoming more of a two-way thing where my opinion was starting to be valued. I really enjoyed my time there. They are a fantastic club with good staff, a lot of whom are still there now.

When I look at my journey, I do feel it's been a stepping-stone each time. That's not to be disrespectful to Wigan or Bolton – they were both step-ups at the time – and of course moving to Liverpool is a huge step-up. It was a fantastic opportunity when I came here in 2013 working with the Under-10s to 12s before taking the U16s.

Again, it was a chance to work with good people and my opportunities have gone on from there. I've enjoyed working with every age-group I've had. It's a very inclusive environment here. Alex Inglethorpe [Academy director] has worked hard to make sure every member of staff is valued and we work closely together. For instance, the coaches all sit in the same office – from Under-Nines through to U18s and 23s – so the expertise is shared around.

I grew up in Fazakerley and went to school at Kirkby CoE, St Chad's. Last month they came in for a pre-season friendly and I was thinking: blimey, all those years ago that was my primary school...

These are really exciting times. I got so many texts when I got the job, including some from numbers I didn't know! One said: "Congratulations on getting the Under-18s job which is an unbelievably privileged position." It was a lovely text and although I knew that, it also made me think: yes, it is. I'll work as hard as I can to make sure that I'm a success for the boys.



THE U18S CHALLENGE

Moving up to the U18s from the 16s could be seen as a natural step-up in that I've worked with all the boys who are in the group before, and I am excited both to work with players again. It's nice to go on that journey with people you know and to work on the things you think they need to develop.

Of course, now that they are at U18s level they have a hope of a pro career and that's a hope that we share. We're here to support, push, encourage and demand more of them and hopefully they'll be able to fulfil their potential, and hopefully that's at Liverpool.

We want to improve standards to help them get to where they want to go. There will be plenty more challenges ahead of them but maybe this is the first real big one because they're now in the building full-time and it's their first taste of what it might be like for this to become a job.

As well as trying to improve the players on the pitch, driving standards and expectations off it is equally as important because the role of being a footballer isn't solely about what you do on a Saturday – it's about how you live, how you get the best out of your body and how you represent the club.

It's a really important couple of years for them and with the staff that we've got here, I believe we've got a really good support-mechanism.

PROGRAMME & PROGRESSION

I'm really excited in terms of the fixture programme. It's a demanding schedule: the Premier League has an additional competition now with the Premier League Cup, so together with the FA Youth Cup there are three competitions to get our teeth into.

The FA Youth Cup is something I've always followed since I started at Wigan. The other week someone mentioned it and I thought: oh wow, that will be me in charge. I know it's something that the boys are excited about and it is a prestigious competition, but I'm just as excited about the other competitions too.

For our U17s it will be the first time they'll have been involved in a league format. For us, it is first-and-foremost about developing the players. If we can push boys into the U23s because they are doing well then that's where they'll play. And if Neil Critchley can get boys to Melwood then that's what he will do.

It's a competitive environment but the real focus will always remain on trying to push players and move them forward and then hopefully the player next in line can carry that on. It was the same for Steven [Gerrard] with the U18s last year and it was the same for Neil the year before that. We'll always be competitive and we'll always do well because we've got good players but first and foremost we want to move the players on because there's nothing better.

CURTIS & CO

It's great when you look at the first-team friendlies and see a few of the boys in and around it, the likes of Curtis Jones, Rafa Camacho and Nat Phillips playing in the pre-season games.

I first worked with Curtis when he was 15 so to see him at Melwood now is fantastic. Now it's for him to go there and impress in the next part of his development and try and do the best that he can. That's what we're about here.

My job now is to work with the team I've got and try to keep pushing them. We're at a fantastic club where boys will get their opportunity, whether that's to move up from the U18s to the 23s or hopefully from the 23s to the first-team environment. Then it's for them to listen, to learn and to raise their standards off and on the pitch, because obviously with being around first-team professionals the level of expectations and demands will be even higher.



AS WELL AS TRYING TO IMPROVE PLAYERS ON THE PITCH IT'S ABOUT DRIVING STANDARDS OFF IT







RAISING THE BAR

A number of boys from the U16s have already sampled U18s football. Jack Bearne, Leighton Clarkson, Remi Savage, Fidel O'Rourke, Jake Cain, Niall Brookwell and Bright Amoateng all featured last season. That was partly through circumstance with players going on loan and U18s being promoted to the 23s and so on, but very often any time you get your chance at the next level it is due to circumstance.

If any of the boys are going to go to Melwood and break into the first team, you'd hope it's because they have this exceptional talent but allied to that the reality is that they're probably going to need an injury or a suspension [to another player]. It's about being ready to step-up.

Last year a number of boys stepped up to the U23s and it was great that Steven trusted a number of the U16s to move in [to the 18s] and they did well. Physically it can be a mis-match but I thought they really acquitted themselves well. A few of them weighed in with goals, too.

The U18s and U19s had a fantastic season, so for those U16s to move up and try to fill the boots of some of those boys was a big ask and I was really pleased with how they did. But now the expectation level goes up again. They're not the young ones any more, they're a youth-team player at U18s level so the bar has been risen again.

TEAM BUILDING

It's probably quite an equal balance between first years and second years. The team will be very much determined by who we have available, so my hope is that some of the U18s will get an opportunity if deserved in the U23s and then that will have an affect on the pool that I pick from.

I'm always careful not to be too rigid in my thoughts. If we do the work and the boys do their work, some will move up to the 23s and I might look at my squad then being a combination of U18s, U17s and U16s. I don't want it to be too fixed. If there's an Under-16 performing well and we think he needs the next challenge, that might be with my group which also keeps the others in my group on their toes.

We've got a real good set of lads and in the first month they've been fantastic. To come back for pre-season and have





'Spanish' weather is tough. But they've worked ever so hard and I'm hopeful it will be a real productive season.

We toured Hungary and Slovakia which was a chance for us to spend 13 days together. We had three games over there then we came home via Germany and played Hertha Berlin.

Pre-season camps like that are a good chance for the lads to bond and spend time together. It was also a fantastic chance for us to work tactically with them in terms of getting our principles across; a time to eat, sleep and play football. The matches were good-quality games against boys who were older so we had that stretch physically, tactically and technically, and now there is a clear identity and idea about the expectations on the pitch.

THE BACKROOM TEAM

I will be working with Scott Mason, Neil Edwards and John Hill. Scott will work as a coach and do the analysis side as well. I'm really excited at the opportunity to work with him – he's got fantastic experience at this level and is someone I'll be able to lean on.

Neil, or 'Taff' as he is known, is someone I've known since we were at Bolton. He has vast experience from his playing days and coaching around the Academy. He looks after the goalkeepers but I don't just see him as a goalkeeping coach. He's got a real good eye on the game and again is someone who I can lean on and bounce ideas off.

John is our new fitness coach who's had first-team experience at Hearts and MK Dons over the past couple of seasons. He's been around the first-team environment and knows the physical demands at first-team level and what it takes. He'll be invaluable for the boys, driving the standards around nutrition, how to live, recovery, what to do right and so on.

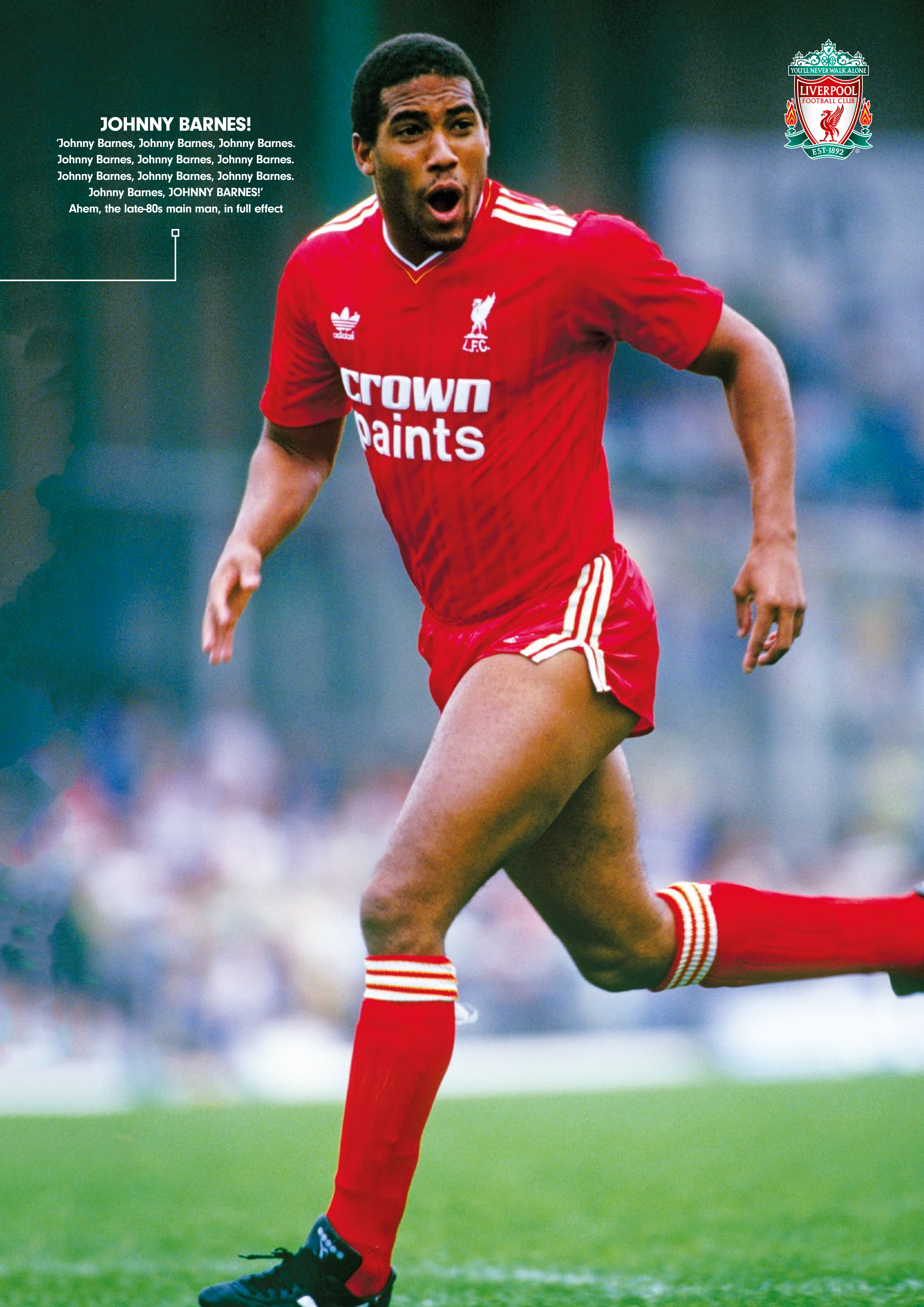
Alex Inglethorpe will be around too. Although Alex is extremely busy with running the Academy, he's hands-on and wants to be 'on the grass'. He has great knowledge and has been a fantastic support in helping us design pre-season and offering guidance on our principles.

THE KICK-OFF

We begin the league campaign at Sunderland on Saturday 11 August and the boys can't wait. Last season they competed well in the league and they're looking forward to getting started again.

Their excitement rubs off on us too. I think at any level as a coach, a player, as fans, that first day of the season is fantastic. The tough bit will be us picking the team, given the way the boys have come back. I think the tenth of August will be a tough day trying to pick 11 players. I'm looking forward to the eleventh but not the tenth!

IT WILL BE A DEMANDING SCHEDULE WITH THREE COMPETITIONS TO GET OUR TEETH INTO THIS SEASON



JOHNNY BARNES!

'Johnny Barnes, Johnny Barnes, Johnny Barnes. Johnny Barnes, Johnny Barnes, Johnny Barnes. Johnny Barnes, Johnny Barnes, Johnny Barnes. Johnny Barnes, JOHNNY BARNES!' Ahem, the late-80s main man, in full effect



WOMEN'S HOUR

Manager Neil Redfearn introduces his all-new Liverpool FC Women's squad on the eve of the 2018/19 FA WSL season

Interview: William Hughes

01

Anke Preuss | **GK**
Age: 25
Former club: Sunderland

"Anke is a top-class goalkeeper who has proven her qualities in the FA WSL 1 with Sunderland Ladies over the past two seasons. She is an excellent shot-stopper as well as being very good with her distribution, so she will suit our style of play perfectly as we look to play out from the back."



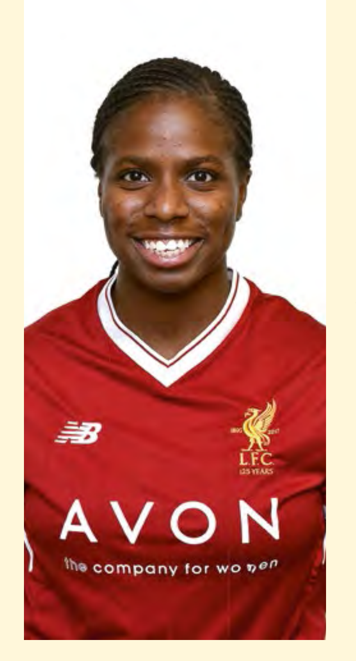


23

Becky Flaherty | **GK**
Age: 20
Former club: Hibernian

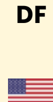


"A young player who has come through the development process. She's got good ability and I think it will be good that she gets to work with Chris Kirkland which will be important in her development. We've brought in a good keeper in Anke Preuss so she's got good competition there and I think Becky's at a point now where we can really try and bring her on."



44

Satara Murray | **DF**
Age: 25
Former club:
Washington Spirit



"Athletically she is unbelievable and she has good technique. Her game-understanding is good. I want to try and open her mind up to different roles and positions because her assets suggest she can do other things, so I'm really looking forward to working with Sats."

02

Jasmine Matthews | **DF**

Age: 25

Former club: Bristol City



"She's a real leader who I believe will play a key part for us next season. Jasmine's versatility was another bonus for us as she is equally as comfortable playing in midfield as she is in defence."





12

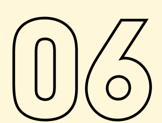
Leandra Little | **DF**

Age: 33

Former club: Doncaster Rovers



"This is a really important signing for the club. Having worked with Leandra last season, she is a real leader as well as being a top-quality defender with huge experience. Leandra will also be a massive influence in the dressing-room this season and will play a key role in helping us to create a positive environment on and off the pitch as we begin a new era for the club."



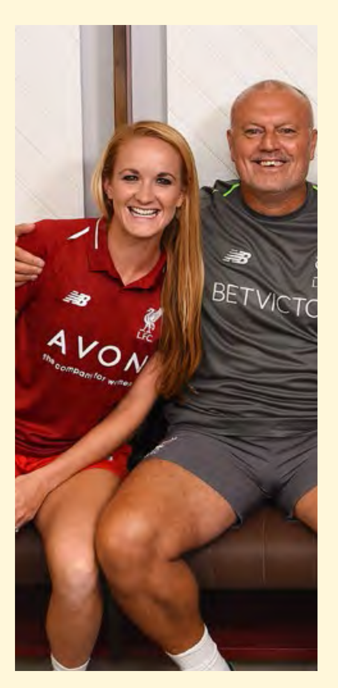
06

Sophie Bradley-Auckland | **DF**

Age: 28

Former club: Doncaster Rovers

"Another great acquisition for the club. She was immense for Doncaster Belles last season and also has the experience of having played WSL1 football before as well as representing England at senior level. Sophie is a very composed defender, extremely confident on the ball, and I'm sure she that will become a real favourite with the Liverpool Ladies supporters."



04

Rhiannon Roberts | **DF**

Age: 27

Former club: Doncaster Rovers

"Rhiannon played an invaluable role for Doncaster Rovers last season as well as also proving her qualities with Wales in their Women's World Cup qualifying campaign. She is an excellent defender who also has a real presence in the back-line and I have no doubt that she will be a key player for Liverpool Ladies next season."



03

Leighanne Robe | **DF**
Age: 24
Former club:
Millwall Lionesses

"Leighanne is a quality defender and a real leader. She is a tough-tackling defender capable of playing at full-back so gives us more options in defence. A few other clubs in FA WSL1 were looking at signing Leighanne so we are delighted that she has put confidence in our plans for the future."





26

Ellie Fletcher | **DF**
Age: 19
Former club: N/A



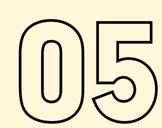
"Ellie's done really well in pre-season. Another player who's got many strings to her bow. She can play centre-back or full-back and I think she could sit-in in midfield too as she's got those sort of qualities. Her game-understanding and reading of the game are exceptional for a young player and she's got great technique as well, so she's another one that we're looking forward to developing."



08

Laura Coombs | **MF**
Age: 27
Former club: Chelsea

"For me, she is a perfect pro. She trains like she plays and her attitude in training is infectious on other people, and these are the type of people and footballers that you want round your club. She's not a minute's bother but sometimes when somebody's got such a great attitude, you can look past the fact that they're technically really gifted, as Laura is, so we're lucky to have her."



Niamh Fahey | **MF**
Age: 30
Former club: Bordeau.




"A really important signing as Niamh is a top-class footballer. She has won a number of trophies during her spells with Arsenal Women and Chelsea Women so her experience will be vital for us this season. I am really looking forward to working alongside Niamh."



19

Amy Rodgers **MF**
Age: 18
Former club: N/A

"Amy's done very well since I came in. She's had a meteoric rise really with the England age-group teams and so on, Again, the bits I've seen in training suggest she's an exceptional talent with great ability and another one with a fantastic attitude who I think is revelling in the new environment."





10

Christie Murray **MF**
Age: 28
Former club:
Glasgow City



"Another really important signing for the club. She is a real goal-threat as well as being technically excellent so will add some creativity to the team. A dead-ball specialist, too. She also has the experience of playing in WSL1 before with Arsenal Women and Bristol City Women so I am confident that Christie will hit the ground running and become a real asset."



07

Jess Clarke **FW**
Age: 29
Former club: Notts County

"She's a fantastic player who has been on the scene now for a long time. I think if we can get Jess in the right place – and I'm sure we can – then we've got a real top player and she's somebody that I'm going to lean on heavily next season."

17

Niamh Charles **FW**
Age: 19
Former club: N/A



"What a talent – wow! For such a young player she has such a mature outlook too. I'm really looking forward to working with Niamh. We're fortunate to have so many talented young players at the club and obviously my background is all about developing young players and giving them an opportunity so I'll do my all to get the best out of them."



36

Ashley Hodson **FW**
Age: 23
Former club: N/A



"She's injured at the minute but I've had two or three good chats with Ash and she's desperate to get back and get fit. Her rehab's going really well and she's a long way ahead of schedule so hopefully she'll be back sooner rather than later and we can develop her. She's so determined and I just know that when she comes back we can get her in a good place."





11

Yana Daniels **FW**
Age: 26
Former club: Bristol City



"Yana will give us more options in the final third and I am really confident that she will become a real fans' favourite. She is a hard-working winger whose versatility to also play upfront gives us far more attacking options as we look to add more goals to the team."

09

Courtney Sweetman-Kirk **FW**
Age: 27
Former club: Everton

"Courtney is a proven goalscorer who will offer us a real goal-threat for the new season. She finished as Everton Ladies' top scorer last season as well as finishing FA WSL2 top-scorer the year before that, which highlights just what a quality striker she is."



20

Rinsola Babajide **FW**
Age: 27
Former club: Watford

"A fantastic talent with blistering pace. Again I'd like to open her mind to different things. We know she can play wide-right and wide-left, where she can come in off her right foot, but I'd like to look at her a little bit more centrally and see if she can affect things a bit more. She goes past players like they're not there, but it's just about adding armoury to her game such as her end-product and thinking more about her goal-output. I think she'll be a real asset for us next season."





And the backroom team...



Chris Kirkland (goalkeeping coach): "An unbelievable appointment for the club. He's got history at Liverpool FC and had a fantastic career. He was an international goalkeeper and he's a real infectious character round the building. I'm really fortunate to have him and he will be important in helping the girls progress."

Leandra Little (club captain and player-liaison). "We will dual up Leandra's role as a player. She ran the dressing-room at Doncaster Belles to an unbelievable effect and it played a big part in us winning the championship last season and being successful, so I know that she'll do that properly. She was organising people from day one and I know she's the right type for us."



Alan Jordan (strength and conditioning coach). "I've kept Alan on from the existing staff. He's very thorough and very meticulous about his conditioning programmes and he's a really good kid too."



Jordan Whelan (analyst): "It's the same situation with Jordan as with Alan. He's really helpful, really knowledgable and a great analyst. What you need to do with young guys like Alan and Jordan is give them their head and that little bit of scope and I think they'll revel in it. I'm really happy with my backroom staff."

~~DAY DELEGATE~~

SPECTACULAR SUMMER EVENT



Others hire a venue.
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Terms and conditions apply. Event must be held May-August.

**WE ARE LIVERPOOL.
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BLOND BOMBSHELL

Red-hot Robbie Fowler dyed his hair blond in the summer of 1995, sparking copycat cuts among young fans as sales of peroxide rocketed – a bit like some of 'God's' shots. Fowler netted 36 goals in 1995/96, the best return of his career.

The Pride of Anfield

Lily Liver steals the show as Reds support Liverpool Pride with city-centre march



Liverpool FC's presence at Liverpool Pride this year was more colourful than ever - with nearly 100 club representatives flying the flag (literally) while joining the march through the city to support and raise awareness of inclusivity and diversity.

The LFC team included former Liverpool Ladies FC and England international, Becky Easton, who said: "I've had a great time. Pride is always so much fun, and it's refreshing to see clubs and organisations like LFC showing their support so passionately."

The contingent was bolstered by the club's LGBT+ fan group 'KOP Outs' with their very own homage to the Pride community: an LFC-inspired drag queen, Lily Liver.

Paul Amann, Liverpool FC's LGBT rep and chair of KOP Outs, said: "We love taking part in Pride each year and this year was better than ever, with Lily Liver receiving an amazing response from Liverpool fans during the march – a fitting way to showcase our KOP Outs fan group."

Lily's fabulous costume was designed by students from Liverpool-based Rare School of Fashion. Course leader James Lacey said: "We loved developing this costume for Liverpool Pride and the students have loved seeing it paraded at Pride."

In celebration and support of Liverpool Pride, the club also dressed its retail-store windows with themed displays, and for nearly two weeks the Kop was lit-up each evening in the colours of the rainbow. The LFC Foundation also hosted a special LGBT+ football tournament for Pride at Anfield Sports & Community Centre.

Liverpool FC was the first Premier League club to support a UK Pride march (six years ago) and the first to receive the Premier League Equality Standard at Advanced level. We have taken many positive steps to ensure that all forms of discrimination are eradicated both on and off the football pitch and work with a range of organisations including Kick it Out, Show Racism the Red Card, and Rainbow Laces.

WHAT'S IN



The New Balance 18/19 LFC Manager's Collection is available now



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MANAGER'S BLACK WOVEN PANT 18/19
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(A11456) £18





LFC BOYS GREY MARL NEON JOG SET
(A11606) £40





LFC JUMBO STATIONERY SET WITH SPIRAL NOTEBOOK
(A11325) £10

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What's On

AUG/SEP





ANFIELD AWAITS BIG KICK-OFF

After all the build-up and anticipation, the Reds will get the new Premier League season underway when West Ham United are the visitors to Anfield on Sunday 12 August (1.30pm). Supporters will be excited by the prospect of seeing some or all of our new signings making their competitive debuts against a Hammers side hoping for improved fortunes following the appointment of Manuel Pellegrini as manager this summer. Eight days later, Jürgen Klopp's men are in South London to tackle former manager Roy Hodgson and his Crystal Palace team on Monday 20 August (8pm) before they return to Anfield to play Brighton & Hove Albion on 25 August (5.30pm). So strap yourselves in and get ready for another ride. One thing we can predict: it won't be dull!

L.F.C.

2018/19 fixtures

AUGUST

12 West Ham United (H)
20 Crystal Palace (A)
25 Brighton and Hove Albion (H)

SEPTEMBER

1 Leicester City (A)
15 Tottenham Hotspur (A)
18/19 UCL Matchday One
22 Southampton (H)
25/26 Carabao Cup 3
29 Chelsea (A)

OCTOBER

2/3 UCL Matchday Two
6 Manchester City (H)
20 Huddersfield Town (A)
23/24 UCL Matchday Three
27 Cardiff City (H)
30/31 Carabao Cup 4

NOVEMBER

3 Arsenal (A)
6/7 UCL Matchday Four
10 Fulham (H)
24 Watford (A)
27/28 UCL Matchday Five

DECEMBER

1 Everton (H)
4 Burnley (A)
8 Bournemouth (A)
11/12 UCL Matchday Six
15 Manchester United (H)
18/19 Carabao Cup 5
22 Wolverhampton Wanderers (A)
26 Newcastle United (H)
29 Arsenal (H)

JANUARY

1 Manchester City (A)
5 FA Cup 3
8/9 Carabao Cup s-f 1
12 Brighton and Hove Albion (A)
19 Crystal Palace (H)
22/23 Carabao Cup s-f 2
26 FA Cup 4
30 Leicester City (H)

FEBRUARY

2 West Ham United (A)
9 Bournemouth (H)
12/13 UCL Round of 16 1
16 FA Cup 5
19/20 UCL Round of 16 1
23 Manchester United (A)
24 Carabao Cup final
27 Watford (H)

MARCH

2 Everton (A)
5/6 UCL Round of 16 2
9 Burnley (H)
12/13 UCL Round of 16 2
16 Fulham (A)/FA Cup 6
30 Tottenham Hotspur (H)

APRIL

6 Southampton (A)/FA Cup s-f
9/10 UCL q-f 1
13 Chelsea (H)
16/17 UCL q-f 2
20 Cardiff City (A)
27 Huddersfield Town (H)
30/1 UCL s-f 1

MAY

4 Newcastle United (A)
7/8 UCL s-f 2
12 Wolverhampton Wanderers (H)
18 FA Cup final

JUNE

1 UCL final

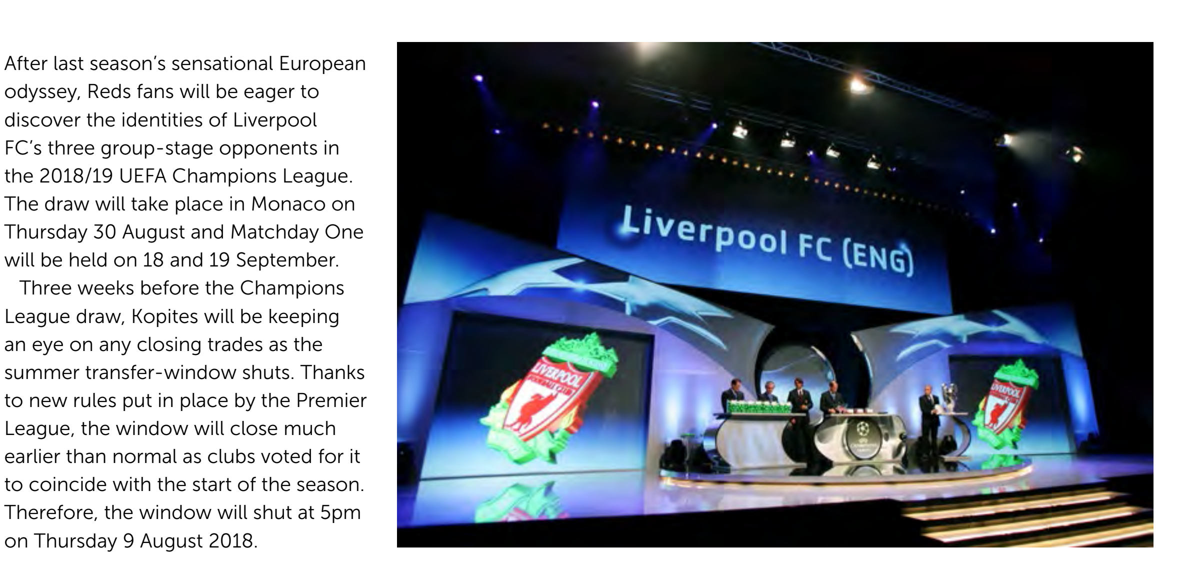
AUG/SEP

What's On

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE DRAW

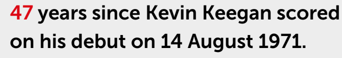
After last season's sensational European odyssey, Reds fans will be eager to discover the identities of Liverpool FC's three group-stage opponents in the 2018/19 UEFA Champions League. The draw will take place in Monaco on Thursday 30 August and Matchday One will be held on 18 and 19 September.

Three weeks before the Champions League draw, Kopites will be keeping an eye on any closing trades as the summer transfer-window shuts. Thanks to new rules put in place by the Premier League, the window will close much earlier than normal as clubs voted for it to coincide with the start of the season. Therefore, the window will shut at 5pm on Thursday 9 August 2018.



ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...

52 years since a Roger Hunt goal won the FA Charity Shield v Everton on 13 August 1966.
47 years since George Sephton made his debut as the 'Voice of Anfield' on 14 August 1971.
14 years since Spanish duo Xabi Alonso and Luis Garcia joined Liverpool FC on 20 August 2004.
57 years since Ian St John scored his first LFC goal on 30 August 1961.
41 years since the one and only Sir Kenny Dalglish joined Liverpool FC from Celtic on 10 August 1977.



47 years since Kevin Keegan scored on his debut on 14 August 1971.

Twenty-year-old striker Keegan had been signed from Scunthorpe in May 1971 and it was expected that he would take the time-honoured route through the reserves.

However, manager Bill Shankly had been impressed by the youngster in pre-season training and selected him for the first team in their traditional full-scale practice match at Melwood, held on the eve of the 1971/72 football season.

Shankly later recalled: "Normally our reserve team gives the senior side a tough time but in this instance the seniors won easily. I asked Ian Ross, the second-team skipper, what had happened and he just pointed to Keegan and said: 'He made all the difference'."

Handed the no7 shirt for the curtain-raiser against Nottingham Forest at Anfield, Keegan was not about to give it up lightly. Inside the first 16 minutes he'd scored a goal and also won a penalty.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Pepe Reina
36 on 31 August

Gerry Byrne
80 on 29 August

Joel Matip
27 on 8 August

Alan Kennedy
64 on 31 August

Didi Hamann
45 on 27 August

Steve McMahon
57 on 20 August

Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain
25 on 15 August



Bolo Zenden
42 on 15 August

Djibril Cisse
37 on 12 August

Taiwo Awoniyi
21 on 12 August



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NEIL MELLOR

What the new boys will bring to this exciting Reds side

After the excitement of the way Liverpool played last season it has been a case of adding to and growing an already-talented squad in the transfer market this summer.

Four new players have arrived and it has also been a good transfer-window with the lack of speculation about key players leaving. In the past we had summer-long sagas regarding the futures of players like Luis Suarez and Philippe Coutinho whereas now Liverpool had Roberto Firmino and Mo Salah signed up on new contracts.

You've got to give the manager and the owners credit for that but also for spending big to strengthen key positions, not least with the arrival of Alisson from Roma.

When you are the world-record buy for any position there is always going to be a little bit more pressure and spotlight on you. Alisson will have to accept that, but when you are seen as one of the best you also have to prove it. He has done very well for Roma and Brazil – now he has to show why Liverpool spent so much on him.

Despite Simon Mignolet and Loris Karius having spells of being the first choice goalkeeper it has often been a position that has never felt established for either of them and remained an area we could strengthen.

Signing Alisson is a real statement of intent from the owners and manager. They have addressed the issue by buying one of the best keepers in the world who will not only strengthen Liverpool defensively but ease the matchday nerves you can sense among the Anfield crowd.

I haven't seen a lot of Fabinho but the defensive midfield position he plays in is particularly important given how many sides operate with a no10 in the hole between the lines. Liverpool haven't had a natural shield there for a few years and although Jordan Henderson did well there last season, Fabinho's arrival may release the skipper to play further forward.



Naby Keita is an exciting arrival and with Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain out long-term and Adam Lallana having missed much of last season, he'll add some creativity. Klopp is excited to have signed him because the way he wins the ball back in good areas will be a huge asset for Liverpool.

Firmino was superb at it last season, and with Keita adept at it too, it will allow Liverpool to make even more of the pace of Salah and Mane in wide areas. His ability to win the ball high up the pitch will be one of our main strengths.

That front-three of Salah, Mane and Firmino were the best in Europe last season and when fully fit will all play, so I'm looking at Xherdan Shaqiri as a player who will provide Klopp with a different option when he needs it. He has quality in the final third, can slot into different formations and with the number of matches Liverpool are likely to play again will get plenty of game-time.

Towards the end of last season there were a few Premier League matches when the manager made changes after big Champions League matches and I felt we lacked the squad depth in attacking areas. Shaqiri could be the difference and even though it seems like he has been around forever, at 26 he has plenty of good years ahead.

Hopefully all four signings can make big contributions because it is paramount that a club like Liverpool wins trophies.

Since Jürgen has been here we've seen progression each season and there is now a really strong connection between himself, the players and the supporters – a connection not many other clubs have. The football has been really exciting but ultimately we all want to win things, particularly the Premier League.

It will be difficult for Man City to match the standards they set last season and I see Liverpool as one of the main contenders to push them. If our key players remain fit and perform well, this Liverpool side will be genuine contenders and I'm optimistic they can bring a long-awaited trophy back to Anfield in 2018/19.

• Follow Neil on Twitter @NeilMellor33


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